

THE INVOCATION

ISSUE 6



invocation

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greetings from the perverted one

editorial by disciple of magash

M

ell it's been a bit of rush since the last issue to get this one out in less than three months, as the July issue was late. It's amazing how much work it can take putting the Invocation together but at the end of the day it is well worth it. More so this issue as we have now gone interactive! Trust me, it took more time than I care to admit to work out how to do some of the functions, especially as I am a relative novice when it comes to the publishing software. Still I think the end result works, and I hope you all enjoy being able to bring up bigger pictures to help with those painting tutorials, as well as the handy quick links you can find on the contents page, and also the bottom of each page.

On the talk of new ideas, the past few months on CN have shown more than a fair few being thrown around. After the initial outcry when the 8th Edition was released, Vampire Counts players seemed to have decided to suck it up and deal with the drop in power level. Not only have some great ideas popped up to make us competitive but players are also doing it whilst maintaining a positive attitude. Indeed in a recent poll on CN, the majority of members voted they liked the 8th edition, many stating they liked the fact they now had to fight that little bit harder to win battles which made victories all the more worthwhile.

Finally, not to go all Tzeentch on you (I much prefer Slaanesh), but the time of changes is nearly upon us. Most of you won't have missed the updates I have been provided in regards to the upgrades due for CN, indeed there are some further updates in this issues news section. Well most of them are due for implementation in the next three months, so the waiting is almost over. This is due in a big way to the help that many of CN's members have provided via donations. I have been very touched to see how many people responded and donated (in one case \$50.00!), and it has really helped, especially as many of you now I have a family as well. So not only is CN paid up for the year, it now means the upgrades are being pushed along.

So I hope you all enjoy this issue, as well as the new functions soon to be on CN, and if anyone wants to chat you know where to find me!



Carpe Noctem news

To kick off this issues news section, I am very pleased to announce that in the last year Carpe Noctem has been going from strength to strength! Members keep on joining, posting is on the increase and all in all the site is growing every month. I want to thank all the staff who put in hard work, as well as the members. Let's keep it going and make CN the best place for vamps around!

WFO System

Following on from last issues notification, I can advise that this has still been worked on behind the scenes. There are still some bugs to iron, but implementation is expected before the end of this year.

Gallery

Another upgrade that I have been asked about. and another one that is currently undergoing testing (busy busy!), members should look forward to this being implemented within the next few months.

Secret Santa!

Our community is always looking for new ways to have fun, and even though it is a few months away they are already getting into the Christmas spirit! For the first time a Secret Santa is been run, where members paint each other a model. It is being run by two of CN's mods and promises to be lots of fun. You can find more information in CN's announcement section.

Founder Master Vampire Leaves

Though many of you know that MV took a step back and handed over ownership of CN to me, he was still around. However he has finally decided that it was time for him to fully leave and since the last issue has resigned his Admin status. On behalf of myself and Carpe Noctem we would like to thank him for founding our great site, and wish him well for everything to come.

User Projects

User Projects has now been combined with this section, as it was felt a dedicated

section was perhaps too much. There has been some progress however:

The Vampire Council

CN's epic roleplay is now drawing to a close as the Council readies its armies for a final battle against the might of Nagash. It promises to be fantastic and fitting end to the RP, but it is not all going to end there. The sequel is already in planning, and will be starting one week approximately after the first finishes.

Bloodline Armies

This is now being revised for the 8th edition, with the Blood Dragon rules and powers amended, with just the army list needing finalised.

Legion of Nagash

Another project that is being amended for the 8th edition, already the Magic Lores and part of the magic items has been changed.

game news

The Gunhearts

Well this is one project that has certainly struggled. But everytime it looks set to be cast into the dark vaults of the archive, someone pops and tries to ressurect it again. This time that person is none other than myself. I am hoping my experience with the TVC will finally manage to lift this project off the ground. It again has changed noticably, this time the role-play is about a gang set deep underneath a hive, basically a Necromunda RP. We are only just kicking off so if you want to join in right from the start, now is the time!

Zombie Pirates

This user project is sadly starting to flag, and is staring into the abyss of the archive. Now is a prime time to get this project going again, so if you want to save it, get posting in that area!

Tale of X Gamers

This project has kicked off well, and whilst some seem to have fallen by the wayside, some are still striding onwards. Here's a few words from the moderator who is running it, Onikaigo:

We have some of the biggest names in the Vampire World participating in the Tale! Myself included! (Onikaigo, for those that don't know me) We have our brave and perverted leader, Disciple of Nagash; the never to be renamed Captain Rubber Ducky, Vekarin, Jozef, and Lord of Ravens; then some up and coming names like Santawraith and Sanai, Big D von Carstein and others. We've got very unique models (Disciple of Nagash has Ellie, the Skeleton Elephant for instance), we've got armies under specific themes, we've got tons upon tons of skeletons, Ghouls, and knights, and we're not done yet! The Tale pledges are mostly fluid, allowing substitutions or minor changes at near whim.

It's a good thing we have until January to finish painting this veritable horde of glorious undeath! All told, we've got well over 2000 models pledged, from over 4 different gaming systems, and showcasing as many as 19 different races or armies! We've even got one dedicated husband and wife painting duo that's painting over 13000 points worth of Vampire Counts models, and are moving along at a very impressive clip!

Finally

As mentioned in my editorial I recently implemented a donation function for CN. This is a no pressure way for members to give back to CN if they so wish, as every penny goes towards improving the site. If anyone would like to contribute, any amount big or small, then you can do so by clicking on the below button.

[Carpe Noctem Donation](#)

the necropolis vault

Written by Vekarin the Dark Bladed

review of 8th edition common magic items

The Warhammer world is a place full of magic, and a seemingly inescapable result of that is the perforation of little magical objects available to all races. They pervade the entirety of the planet, found or forged in every land, from the bleakness of the Chaos Wastes to the humid warmth of the Southlands, available to every army of the Warhammer world.

It's a good thing that they're so dang useful.

As everybody knows, or at least should, common magic items are items that every army in Warhammer can use, and the 8th Edition has brought us a whole slew of these new items. As with all magic items, there are six categories to choose from, and I'll start by going over the items in of these categories in depth.

Weapons: The first thing that a hero or lord in any Warhammer army (at least the hitty ones, anyway) needs a good weapon. I don't know about anyone else, but I always choose my Magic Weapons first and fill in the rest later. That might be because Magic Weapons are listed before other items and I like to do things in order, but I think that these items really have a powerful influence on the role of any given character.

The first item worth mentioning is the Warrior Bane sword, which subtracts an attack from an enemy whenever it does a wound. Characters in Warhammer are no longer all about obliterating enemy troops in combat, but oftentimes the name of the game is defense against more powerful characters or monsters. This makes the Warrior Bane sword a winner – it's cost means that it fits snugly into a Hero's magic item allotment with some of the more defensive options like the Talisman

of Preservation, and it allows even the most inane character to severely neuter a powerful enemy combatant with a couple lucky rolls.

Another hidden treasure in the Magic Weapons section is the Sword of Anti-Heroes. At first glance this seems very situational, but more and more I have been witnessing large numbers of characters being put into 'deathstar' units that are charged headlong at the enemy like a Spanish bull stung in the rear by a hornet in order to cause inordinate amounts of damage – I myself am guilty of this nefarious practice. The Sword of Anti-Heroes is the answer for that, as those deathstar units are suddenly boosting your Vampire Lord to six or seven attacks with a correspondingly ridiculous strength. Even a single encounter with an enemy character makes this sword worth it's moderate points cost.

The last weapon that I feel worth mentioning is the Sword of Swift Slaying (oh Roger, what alliteration!). With the new Always Strikes First rules and the enormous initiative of most characters, this sword is basically capable of conferring not only the Always Strikes First rule, but essentially the Hatred one as well, saving points elsewhere on that ability.

Now, I realize that there are plenty of other items in the Magic Weapons section of the book, but most of them are simple carbon copies of the older magic items or upgraded versions, and if you, dear reader, cannot find it within yourself to discover the merits of a sword that confers to you +3 attacks, I have very little hope for you on the battlefield.

Armour: Like I said, a character's role in this new edition is often to simply survive an enemy's challenge, thereby saving his troops and other characters from harm, and no item is more important to this role than a suit of magical armor.

The first item on the list I had originally discounted until I received an excellent tip from a notable Australian. The Charmed Shield is one of those five-point items that one looks at and thinks that your magic item allotment is much better spent on heavy armor and special helmets, but I think otherwise now. There are plenty of characters that stay outside of the pervading safety of their units and run around on the ground – whether they be dragon riders or little Lycni Vampires. Considering the threat that these guys often pose, the enemy is usually very willing to fire artillery like cannon and bolt throwers at your poor little loners. Wouldn't you spend five points to make that first cannon shot not work? Just something to think about...

Another excellent item simply for its mundane applications is the Dragonhelm. Personally, I love the idea of a helm item and I like that now more forces can have access to them. The fact that they are

undeniably useful helps as well. For those who don't know, most helm items increase the bearer's armor save by one regardless of what other armor that they are wearing. This means that a model on foot with heavy armor and a shield would pick up a hefty 3+ armor save by wearing a helm. As such the uses for this item are immediately apparent, but it also has the added ability of increasing the wearer's defense against flaming attacks. Now that flaming attacks are so much more useful than they were in addition to their already considerable usefulness means that you will probably be seeing many of them around, so having that 2+ ward save can be a very powerful boon.

One thing that I'd like to mention about a lot of the new magic armors that a lot of them are classified as heavy armor. This may not seem like a big deal, but a great deal of armies have no access to the heavy armor type, or at least not without spending extra points on upgrades. Armies like Lizardmen or Vampire Counts can finally have their character wearing heavy armor without having to buy Avatar of Death or some wonky magic item. In addition, a lot of these heavy armors have built-in ward saves and things that can

make them really worth their points – the Armor of Destiny, for example, is one of the most powerful items in the game now.



Talismans: On that note, the Talismans of 8th edition perform another, very similar task to some of the new armor options. The Talismans are there simply to increase your character's survivability without taking up those valuable armor slots, and as such the new choices are more important than ever. Like the other categories of

magic items, the less-expensive items are winners here.

I find it hard to write an army list without fitting a Luckstone into it somewhere – that single re-rolled armor save can often mean the difference between the life and death of your character, and that extra assurance for only five points is certainly worth it.

For the same reason, the Dawnstone is also a powerful item, however it is severely limited in its applications simple because of its cost. It is much easier to find room for a one-use, five point item than a twenty-five point one that may only be used a couple times in a game.

While it is a nice assurance, if there is space in a character's inventory, the Talisman of Preservation is an exceedingly powerful item that should be considered heavily. In fact, I honestly think that there is something wrong with an army list in many cases if the two 4+ Ward Saves available to characters (those being the Armor of Destiny and the Talisman of Preservation) were not given wholeheartedly to an army's General and Battle Standard Bearer.

It should be noted that there are now a lot of ways to squeak Magic Resistance into one's army, these talismans being the number one method. While this is an excellent option, especially for players who take large units of troops that will most likely be the target of many enemy damage spells, it is unfortunate because a great deal of the spells that an enemy will be targeting you with (like the dreaded Purple Sun and those pesky Dwellers Below) ignore these resistances completely.

Magic Banners: For space reasons, I would imagine, the omniscient publishers of this new rulebook have placed the Magic Banners section just below talismans. Now, to most it would be astounding that I even bring this up, but in every army book that I have read to date, the magic banners are last in the lineup. It seems that the great Games-Workshop gods have been so taken with the campaign slogan of America's latest president that they have been changing things up all over the place. The result is a greatly confused author. But, I am a slave to order, so next the magic banner must be. There are some really interesting banners in this lineup, some of which are very powerful

and some of which... aren't. It seems like the magic banners section is where the games designers tried to overcome the imbalance between heavy cavalry and infantry, with very little success, it would seem. Why do I say that? Well, look at the options.

A cavalry unit relies on a charge, so a bad charge roll could spell the end for that regiment. In order to mitigate this, why not throw in a Rampager's Standard?

I think besides chariots, cavalry are the unit most hampered by terrain in this edition, so why not add a Ranger's Standard to even the playing field?

While not so useful on infantry, whose move is generally too slow to notice, a unit of heavy cavalry with the Banner of Swift-ness suddenly removes the consequences of their barding, while a unit of fast cavalry become almost the equivalent of one that flies! That's the thought that immediately came to my mind when looking at these options, anyway.

The Banner of Eternal Flame is an excellent counter to the rash of trolls that are being fielded more and more often as well

as those annoying Nurgle Daemons and Drakenhof Grave Guard. The Gleaming Banner is a good choice for faster flanking units that will often be out of range of a Battle Standard Bearer, because for five points you can try and re-roll that all-important swift reform or panic test.

That brings me to, in my opinion anyway, is the number one magic item of the game up until now – the lowly Standard of Discipline. Unless this has been resolved by Games Workshop - and feel free to roast me on a spit later if it has (I only hope that I taste alright afterwards – don't forget the seasonings!) – it is perfectly legal to throw that banner onto a unit that contains your general, increasing his leadership as well. In the case of my Lizard-men army, I can put the banner directly onto my Slann general, making his unit an impressive Leadership 10, Cold Blooded, Stubborn, Immune to Psychology with a re-roll for the battle standard, with his little 12" bubble of leadership 10 with a re-roll. Good luck breaking that. This is due to a fun little loophole in the rules which may or may not be intentional – a unit always uses its highest leadership, and the general's leadership +1 is most certainly going to be the highest. The banner states that

the unit cannot use the Inspiring Presence rule, which is a non-issue because the unit is using only his Leadership. Other units can then use his Inspiring Presence as normal, but at the increased leadership.

Arcane Items: Next in the lineup are the arcane items, an exclusive club of mostly academic (pardon the pun) trinkets. Why are they academic? Let's be honest here – 99% of the time a player with one or two Wizards will take; 1. a Dispel Scroll and 2. a Feedback Scroll, unless they have some other plan for magic. Those are by far the two most useful items in the list for most armies. I'm sure everyone knows what those two individuals do by now, and if you don't than you'd better look it up because your missing something big.

That said, there are some other items that do seem to have some merits. The Channelling Staff being one, meaning that you channel on a 5+ rather than a 6. Throw him into some Arcane Ruins and you're laughing. A lot.

The Earthing Rod looks to be a useful one as well if you expect to be throwing a lot of those dice around and you get a bad miscast.

The Power Scroll is often regarded as one of, if not the, most powerful and broken pieces of kit in the game. It allows any double on a single casting roll to come up as irresistible force, which makes a lot of those uber spells even more uber. Just hope you have a Feedback Scroll on you and he rolled a lot of dice, because nothing will save you and that is a good way to make yourself feel better. Even so, I recommend not taking this item purely on the principle that, generally speaking, humans are social creatures and need other humans in their lives to live properly. Eradicating your friends might actually be bad for your health.

With those items out of the way, there are a couple in here that I regard solely as flukes and gadgets with no real purpose.

The first is the Forbidden Rod, which gives you +D6 power dice (keep in mind that there is a 12 dice limit and this is done at the beginning of the phase), but in return provides a good chance of killing your own mage. Way to go.

Another is everyone's favorite – the Hex Scroll (or the toad scroll, as I've heard it called). While this is a fairly useful item, it requires an enemy spell to get through first, and even afterwards the enemy has a chance of resisting it entirely – a fairly good chance, might I add, if you are



using it on anyone worth using it on. There are two excellent uses that I can see for this item, each being relatively situational however; the first is if the wizard is the general of the army, which in and of itself is relatively rare. The scroll reduces the character's Leadership to 1, so you've pretty much rid the army of that protective high-leadership bubble, if it had one in the first place. The second use is if the

enemy wizard is in combat with your own troops, a rare occurrence in and of itself, because it would allow you to dispatch him with ease. Unfortunately, though, this seems like another one of those fun little "trick" items that has very little effect on the game.

The last item that I consider relatively useless is the Scroll of Leeching. Like other scrolls, this item requires that you allow an enemy spell through – its first failing. If one were to use it on a spell that would donate a decent number of dice, there is a good chance that the enemy will have very few dice left for you to counter. If you use it in preparation for a larger spell, you've blown a 50 point scroll on two or three power dice.

Enchanted Items: Last (but certainly not least) in this auspicious lineup are the Enchanted Items, another category fallen unfortunately prey to Games-Workshop's re-ordering campaign. This bunch of items seem to be a random conglomeration drawn together by their mutual ability to confer fun little special rules and effects on their bearers.

Also in this group are the new potion items, which (I am told) are making a return from a much older edition of the game.

A great deal of these potions appear to be excellent at giving characters an often much needed boost against enemy characters in challenges. As I said earlier, characters generally perform a defensive role in a unit, and these can help you out a great deal with that. After all, a Potion of Toughness might severely decrease the amount of damage that an enemy character can do in a challenge or a Potion of Speed can allow your hero to do some damage before the enemy has a chance.

Now, potions aside, there are some other very useful items in the enchanted items category.

First up is the Ironcurse Icon, a useful item that I see more and more in lists. With the newfound effectiveness of war machines, a 6+ ward save may not seem like a big deal, but when those mortars start shooting you'll be making quite a few saves, and even a couple passed ones will justify the nominal cost for this item.

Another excellent item for its point cost is the Terrifying Mask (I'm not even going grace the full name with a mention). It's low point cost mean that it can easily be fit into the allotted points for a Champion, which immediately puts it in use on the front line and effectively removes the downside.

Another exceedingly useful item for characters in smaller, more elite armies is the Crown of Command. While a larger force can re-create this items effect with steadfast, a smaller unit such as cavalry really benefit from the stubborn rule.

The last, and possibly the most useful and controversial item in the Enchanted Items list that I'll talk about is the Folding Fortress. The description of the item is notoriously lacking, saying only that it produces a watchtower, with no mention of the size or shape of the building. It is my belief that the intention is to produce a watchtower of similar size to the building that Citadel produces, however that is not stated. As such, I know many Tomb Kings players chomping at the bit to throw a Casket of Souls on top of 18" tall edifices and Empire players excited to put their cannons on all-seeing towers where

they can obliterate anything on the map. Ouch.

One item that I really, truly, honestly cannot find a use for is the Wizarding Hat. Honestly, why would you purchase this item? Unless I am mistaken, it doesn't work for characters who are already Wizards, making it only an option for combat characters, who are better off spending their points on magic weapons and armor. But let's for a moment fantasize that one does take the item – they are now stuck with a combat Lord who has very few useful abilities except for being a Level 2 Wizard. Now, you have no idea what you are going to use this new wizard for because both his spells and his lore is randomly chosen. All for the price of stupidity. Fantastic.

Well that concludes my thoughts on the new common magic items. Hopefully my dear readers have found this useful or at the very least momentarily entertaining.

Cheers!
~Vekky



The Doom Seeker



New Slayer Brotherhood
<http://z8.invisionfree.com/SlayerBrotherhood/>
Warhammer Fantasy Battle Reporter
<http://battlereporter.freeforums.org/portal.php>

Current and back issues available at:
<http://issuu.com/thedoomseeker/docs>
<http://www.4shared.com/dir/29941410/23ea5bcf/sharing.html>

The webzine for players who believe in
playing the game for fun.

ghostly art

A Painting Tutorial by SethDrallitoc

Many many people on Carpe Noctem have seen and used Seth's now famous ethereal painting technique. Even I have used it (though sadly not to its best effect), and I thought it was high time we dragged Seth out and finally got him to recap on how to produce this fantastic effect ~ Disciple of Nagash

Step One:

Depending on your basing technique this first stage may or may not apply to you. I usually gravel the base of my models before I undercoat, and in the case of spirit hosts, I like to blend the line between base and miniature as much as possible. This gives the effect that the spirit host is passing through the ground rather than standing upon it. The model I will be using in this demonstration is from the Lord of the Rings range (with a weapon swap) which I think fits the bill better than the spirit hosts made for Warhammer (They look much more like the artwork in the Vampire Counts 2001 rulebook). This technique will however work just as well on any miniature.

Step Two:

Undercoat your miniature with Chaos Black. At least a couple of coats should be applied, preferably with spray, and touched up where necessary with a brush.





Step Three:

In your mind's eye visualize the miniature you have selected divided into 4 equal parts. Leave the lowest quarter black and paint the top 3 quarters in solid Codex Grey.



Step Four:

Next dry brush the remaining black area with the same Codex Grey.





Step Five:

From the mid-section up paint a solid coat of Fortress Grey.



Step Six:

Then using the Fortress Grey dry brush below this mark (but only as far as the black quarter).





Step Seven:

Lastly paint the top quarter, which should only be the head and shoulders of the model, skull white and once again dry brush downwards but only as far as the Codex Grey Quarter.



Step Eight:

Let all of this dry overnight to make sure that the seal is good. Then give the whole specter a head to foot wash with Thraka Green (I use this straight from the pot; no diluting). Make sure you get a good, even coverage across the entire model and then leave it to dry. Quarter.



Step Nine:

Paint the base to fit the theme of your army and voila! You are on the path to spirit host enlightenment.



the Lahmians

Written by Ophidicus

the mistresses of manipulation

Introduction

The Vampire Sisterhood of Lahmia are one of the seven great Bloodlines, named in honour of the ancient Vampire capital ruled by Queen Neferata, the Beautiful Death. The Lahmians are the most insidious Vampires in the Old World, for their strength lies in manipulating the power struggles of the other civilisations to further their own ends. Whereas the von Carsteins seek to subjugate the human realms through military force, the Lahmians infiltrate its political structures, whereas the Blood Dragons seek to defeat its finest warriors, the Lahmians corrupt its champions' hearts, and whereas the Necrarchs would destroy all life, the Lahmians would place their Undeath at its very beating heart. Subtle conquest is the Lahmian way, their presence is as a toxin in the bloodstream of civilisation.



Characteristics

The Lahmian Vampiress is a creature of unearthly beauty, irresistible to mortal men, who see in the Lahmian a reason to prove themselves. Men feel they must protect her, to fight off competitors for the favour of her heart, or, if it pleases her to appear sickly and wan, to dote on her so that none but he may take advantage of her vulnerability. All such men are fools, for they have been trapped by the predator, and it will be her choice as to whether she administers a paralysing venom or constricts her prey until it breathes no more.

The Lahmian Vampire's beauty is complemented by many other preternatural talents. She is agile in the extreme, able to leap huge distances, scale walls like a spider, fall from great heights and land with little more than a graceful bend of the knee. She can move at a speed faster than the human eye can follow, faster even than an arrow or a musket shot. Her voice resonates at pitches indistinguishable to human ears, giving her command over beasts as well as men. She can aid this command with telepathic force, instilling sensations of lust or terror, giving her dominion over the minds of Elves, Dwarfs and Orcs. She can hear the slightest change in the rate of a human

heartbeat, and smell fear in Elven skin. She is also possessed of a fiendish temper, liable to rage at any perceived insult and vindictive beyond reason when wronged. This, of course, may be said of all Vampires, but it is least expected of such a cultured beauty as the Lahmian at court.

Though the Lahmians are possessed of beauty as we understand it, their forms are wildly diverse, for as a Vampire ages, it changes in many ways. Some changes are subtle, like the ability to sense the world as no mortal can, or greater power over the winds of magic. Equally, some dark gifts are extravagant mutations, wings, altered limbs, or the ability to change form at will. Many Lahmians are able to disappear into a fine ghostly mist, or assume the form of a bat, swallow or snake. Thus they can avoid prying eyes or enter the sanctuaries of the foe unseen. In many ways, the gift of stealth is the greatest boon of Vampirism to the Lahmians, for it has allowed them access to the darkest secrets men hold in their vaults, secrets they have used to further their own power.

It takes effort of will to maintain the mask of human form, and much psychic energy is spent staving off the true form

of the Vampire underneath. A Lahmian must feed regularly to avoid losing control of her façade, for she has much to lose by revealing her true nature. A few Lahmians have been careless enough to let their false faces fade, and have paid dearly. Such was the case with Princess Layla of Copher, who was subsequently reprimanded severely by Neferata for letting down her guard. Others have been less fortunate, burned or beheaded by the Templars of Sigmar. The Queen of Lahmia is loath to let her beloved Sisters be condemned, and will go to great lengths to have the remains of high-ranking Lahmians reclaimed, that they may be restored to unlife by dark rituals.

Despite their apparent frailty, all Lahmians are capable fighters, using their unholy agility to complement their superhuman strength, though some take the art of combat to greater degrees. It is said that a Lahmian will toy with her enemy as a cat with a mouse, and many have suffered after underestimating the prowess of the Vampire maidens.

Lady Adelheid became infamous amongst the high society of Hergig when her husband Baron Matthias von Grieg struck her at a banquet to celebrate their first anniversary;

in a deed hitherto unknown in a woman of rank, she responded by challenging him to a duel. As the challenged party, the Baron opted to fight the duel immediately, and that the weapon would be his own bare hands, declaring, "This time they shall silence her!" Adelheid was indeed silent as she danced around him, untouched by his brute strength as she calmly broke his limbs in turn. He grovelled for forgiveness and his life, crying, "First blood! We fought to first blood!" She gestured to the floor, as clean as when it had been polished mere hours before. Von Grieg shook and whimpered as he looked into his wife's eyes and knew that for all his wealth and titles, he was utterly powerless. Adelheid drew first blood with a deft swipe of her delicate hands, and was still silent as her husband's lifeblood drained away, still silent as she gorged on his flesh and as the guests fled in terror. Within the hour Witch Hunters arrived, for the sight of such violence in a fair woman could only be explained by sorcery. They found von Grieg slumped in his chair, drained of blood (and the floor again immaculate). Above the mantle hung a portrait of the von Griegs. The Baron's face had been slashed, and in red were the words, "No Longer Silent."

Origins: Ancient Lahmia

The curse of Vampirism originated in the Nehekharan city of Lahmia, in which Queen Neferatem used the stolen Necromantic secrets of Nagash to create the Elixir of Life, and her closest allies drank and became the Master Vampires, creatures of evil beyond compare.

The details of Lahmia's fall are told elsewhere, and we need only concern ourselves with the facts we know of its survivors. The Master Vampires and their kin fled to the colder lands of the North, and each went their separate ways to plot their revenge upon the living. For many years Neferata's Vampires took refuge in the forests and mountains of the Old World, protected by cohorts of the Undead raised from the many battlefield graves and razed villages to be found in those hostile times. There were, of course, no fortresses of stone built by human hands in those days, for men still lived as tribal savages. To their eyes, the sight of these enchanting maidens with powers over life and death would have been a glimpse of the divine, and many Lahmian vampires found themselves worshipped as goddesses, and fed the most succulent human meat, the strongest prisoners from raids, or in harder times, their

own sons and daughters. Such tribes would have been accustomed to death, and would consider it a small price for the favour of such a guardian. The Lahmians took to this adulation gladly, playing the role of protector and dictator in settlements scattered all across the Old World. Each of the Sisters was careful to maintain contact through telepathy and messenger-creatures with the others of her kind, and so were spun the first strands in the web of subterfuge that is their true strength.

Neferata found retreat in the World's Edge Mountains, and devoted herself to perfecting the Necromantic skills she had begun to learn under the sorcerer W'soran. Her talents were prodigious and she was soon able to summon armies of the dead to rival the brutish hordes of Orcs that marauded across the land. She tutored her wisest Sisters in the black arts and with them they raised an army of conquest, to take for herself a new Holy City of Lahmia. Eight centuries after the fall of Ancient Lahmia, Neferata's armies overran the fortress of Silver Pinnacle and established a stronghold for the Sisterhood which endures to the present time.

The coming of Sigmar was an inconvenience for the Lahmian tribal rulers as their dominions were taken into the Imperial fold, and the Maiden-Gods were forced out, abandoning their worshippers like the mercurial devils they were. They did not have to run far, for they soon found their way back into the new Imperial strongholds, which steadily grew into the mighty cities of the present time. Thus have the Lahmians stayed close to the heart of the Empire since before its very birth

Lahmian Vampires in the Old World

Lahmian Vampires are active in virtually all of the Old World's human societies, with known cells in Altdorf and Marienburg, the Bretonnian city of Couronne and the Tilean city-state of Miragliano. Since the Lahmian Bloodline has existed for millennia prior to the expansion of these cities, it is likely that agents have been working in these locations, and most other significant settlements, since their foundings. However little we know about the Lahmian masterplan, we can be sure they know every inch of the enemy territory, and have the potential to undermine any government, topple any ruler and turn nations in upon themselves with little more than a word in an ear. All of these places are strategically

significant, and there is no telling the harm that could be done to human society if they were to fall victim to a co-ordinated attack of treachery by the nobles under the heel of the Lahmian Sisters. Why they have chosen not to incite such a rebellion so far is not known, for there have been many opportunities when the very future of the world has been at stake, nonetheless, they bide their time, as does a spider at the centre of her web. Perhaps they have indeed been behind some of the Empire's times of strife, who can say whether they manipulated the warring Electors during the Time of the Three Emperors? The Sisterhood keep many secrets, and they keep them well.

It is believed by Imperial scholars that Lahmians have little battlefield knowledge, but this, like most assumptions made of the Sisterhood, is mistaken. Many Sisters are well versed in the ways of warfare, and there are a number of highly competent generals in Neferata's employ. They have had centuries to perfect their skills, studying the strategies of their enemies as well as their allies. The charming bride of a veteran officer may give a look of polite bemusement as he and his advisers plan their assaults, secretly formulating plans of her own, often in collusion with the opposing general's

mistress. It is easy for a bourgeois man of war to dismiss the intelligence of his woman, when in truth her military acumen and experience may far surpass his own.

Just as often these sirens will be found in the heat of battle, commanding their Undead legions from the front lines with as much skill and subtlety as any expert war-leader; they have even been known to use their charm as a tactical ploy; what noble Paladin of Bretonnia, for example, would not fight to the last to free the captured maiden from the foul Undead? He would be wise to quell his chivalrous impulses in the face of a Lahmian at war. A favourite tactic is to allow the impetuous Knight to fight his way through many lesser Undead creatures, and, upon 'rescuing' the Lahmian, she resurrects the very fiends he has just destroyed, cutting him off from his own would-be rescuers.

Other tricks include corrupting the leaders of the opposing armies in the heat of battle, using their powerful hypnotic magic to turn even the hearts of Elves and Dwarfs against their friends in defence of this 'innocent'. Mortal men are, predictably, most susceptible to this form of manipulation, and many a Vampire hunt has stopped dead in its tracks when its leader has knelt before

the hunted, and kissed her feet.

The Silver Pinnacle: Lahmia Resurrected

The ancient fortress of Silver Pinnacle was usurped from its Dwarf rulers over two millennia before our time, and has since been the capital to the Queen of Lahmia. Here there is none of the pretence to meekness that the Lahmians of the human cities adopt, all Vampires of the Sisterhood proudly display their elegant claws and fangs, and a few of the more extravagant dark gifts may be seen, ravens' wings or the tails of serpents. It houses a legion of Undead soldiers, Skeleton warriors and elite Wights, just as in the tomb-fortresses of Khemri.

Ancient Lahmia has a great influence on the architecture of Silver Pinnacle, gone are the polygonal carvings and ancestor-worship of the Dwarfs, replaced by slender columns, elegant arches and tall statues; and whereas in ancient times these would have represented the pantheon of Nehekhara, now they celebrate the Vampires themselves as the dark gods they have become, a beautiful and macabre tribute to the Blood Sisters. Morbid angels thirty feet high dominate the great hall,

figures of debased perfection composed in baroque rapture. Marble lips frame silver blade-fangs penetrating alabaster necks, from which spurt arterial rivulets in ruby. Here the Queen of Mysteries holds her infamous banquets, and gives honours and orders to her assembled vassals. Thousands of prisoners are butchered at the ensuing revelries, and acts of unparalleled sadism are performed for the thrill of blood-letting.

But the Pinnacle is no mere pleasure-palace, it is a political capital as much as a haven for debauchery. It is the heart of the Dark Queen's network of spies, a whole subterranean wing is reserved for intelligence, wherein the Lahmians, aided by a small army of living thralls document the movements and actions of every army, the political climates of every state in the Old World, and keep detailed and accurate maps of all known territories. Nowhere is beyond the sight of the Sisterhood, for they employ beasts of the earth and sky to act as their eyes in distant lands.

Men of the Sisterhood

Due to the misandristic attitudes of Neferata and her officers, who vowed at the fall of Lahmia never to be ruled by Man, who had committed the most terrible

wrongs to her kind, very few men have been given the Blood Kiss by Lahmians. Male Vampires are chosen for much the same reasons as the females; they are typically of disarmingly handsome and youthful appearance, silver-tongued and light of step. A man who particularly impresses a Lahmian may be granted the privilege of being her servant and champion for as long as it pleases her to keep him. He will act as her valet, attending to all necessary tasks that she considers beneath her, such as communicating with undesirables of the outside world. He may fight duels for her amusement, or bring her fresh meat when it pleases her not to go hunting in the night. Such lovers are few, for a Lahmian will have had many fawning suitors over the centuries, and are the hardest hearts of all to win. That said, a rare thrall indeed would consider it a hollow victory.

It is not in the nature of any Vampire to trust another, but the men of the Lahmian bloodline are held in particular suspicion by the cynical Sisters. This means they are seldom close to the inner circles of Lahmian cells, but used as agents when men wilfully exclude women from their presence. Thus they maintain their place in the Lahmian web whilst remaining forever inferior.

Conclusion

The Lahmians are merciless in their task of weakening human civilisation from within. Their weapons of seduction, corruption and betrayal are the greatest threat to the political stability of the human lands. They are a key to the ultimate strategy of the Undead. They know full well that some use them as pawns, mere allies to further causes of their own, as W'soran thought of his protégé Neferata. She is, as she was then, a Queen, and acts of her own volition. The Lahmians too use their own allies as pawns, for their own ambition is that of all Vampires, dominion over all living creatures. Whether by guile, sorcery or armed force no one Bloodline can achieve this without the aid of the others, and while we living creatures still walk we shall never know by whose hand these pieces move...



The Word of Hashut



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neferata mistress of the Lahmians

Written by Ophidicus

The ancient Vampiress Neferata was born Princess Neferatem to the royal dynasty of Lahmizzar, several decades after the first defeat of Nagash, the Accursed One. As a child she was distant, but fiercely intelligent, quickly gaining favour with the politicians & diplomats of the court. She was beloved of all the people of Lahmia by the time she was sixteen years old, and her beauty was as radiant as the sun, befitting her name. Despite the reverence of the people, Neferatem was aloof, and she kept many secrets from the court of Lahmia, the greatest of which was her command of magical power. Spirits spoke into her thoughts, and the minds of others were as bold as the hieroglyphs carved on the temple walls. She hid her mystical gift well, but she could not disguise it from everyone.

Following Nagash's defeat, much of his work was destroyed, but a few of his blasphemous texts survived the purge, preserved by his agent W'soran, High Priest

of the Mortuary Cult. In Neferata he found a most apt pupil, and in secret she became a potent Necromantic spellcrafter. Within a few years of her coronation as Queen of Lahmia she had created the infamous Elixir of Life and corrupted the city's aristocracy to its core. She overthrew the patriarchal power of the Liche Priests and instated a cult dedicated to the power of her own kind, in which she herself performed bloody ceremonies, sacrificing thousands before the overthrow of the Vampiric regime and the city's destruction by the armies of Khemri.

W'soran's disciples maintain that he manipulated Neferatem into creating the elixir to further his own power and standing in the eyes of Nagash, but none can question the cunning of Neferata, and we have little reason to doubt that her younger self knew full well of W'soran's scheming, for she could know the depths of the mind just by looking upon the face, and she was deep in W'soran's favour. Indeed, she has grown

from a capable Necromancer into a powerful sorceress in her own right, without the need for W'soran, or any other's tutelage. She curses the name of W'soran, for she trusted him as her confidante and spiritual guide, yet he betrayed her faith in him with his loyalty to the Great Necromancer, and for that reason there can never be any reconciliation between the Lahmian and Necrarch bloodlines. He was the first of many trusted men to betray her, and, though she loved both Vashanesh and Abhorash for their own virtues, the betrayal of her childhood mentor was the bitterest blow of all, and the seed of her scorn for men that has festered for millennia.

Following the sack of Lahmia, Neferata fled north with her Sisters, first occupying a complex of caves in the slopes of the World's Edge Mountains, from which she first established her network of spies, gradually gaining strength enough to invade and conquer the Silver Pinnacle, from which

she holds court to this day.

Neferata is utterly convinced of the Vampires' superiority over all mortal life forms, and believes in her own supremacy over all Vampires, as the Queen of Lahmia, and the creator of the Vampire race. She is all too aware that Nagash feels the same way, and several times in the past her armies have come to blows with those of Nagash over this bitterest conflict of interests. Despite her pride in the Lahmian bloodline, she knows that the strength of the Sisterhood alone could not stand against the full wrath of Nagash were he ever to regain his former power, and she is torn between the knowledge that the right to rule the Vampires is hers alone, and the fact that she will need the support of the children of Abhorash, Vashanesh and Maatmeses to achieve her dominion.

Neferata is, wisely, reluctant to engage in open warfare, preferring to act through her agents, whether they be Sisters of Lahmia, seduced vassals or unwitting recipients of her telepathic visitations, but knows that her power can turn the tide of war. On those occasions in which she takes to the field she is a vicious fighter, her ceremonial dagger flicking out like the fangs of a serpent as she deftly deflects all blows aimed at her, from those few with the will to harm such a beautiful creature. She commands the dead with puissant skill, and can slay many foes before disappearing into the fog of war. She is a master of all forms of warfare, and no invasion of the Silver Pinnacle has ever reached its gates.

neferata the queen of mysteries

Neferata counts as a Lord choice.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
6	7	6	5	5	4	9	5	10

Points Cost: 720

Equipment: Neferata is equipped with Dagger of Jet, Crimson Gem of Lahmia, and also is accompanied by her cat Bastet

Mount (one choice only): Barded Nightmare (+20), Hellsteed (+30), Abyssal Terror (+135), Palanquin (+40, see below)

Magic: Neferata is a Level 4 wizard. She uses spells from the Lore of the Vampires and the Lore of Shadow. She may freely mix spells from these Lores. Declare before rolling for spells how many will be generated from each Lore.

Vampiric Powers: Beguile, Walking Death

Master Powers: Immortal Majesty, Seduction, the Sisterhood

Special Rules: Always Strikes First, Undead, 4+ Ward Save

Master Vampire:

All special rules which apply to Vampires apply to Neferata. In addition, she causes Terror. Any friendly Undead model within 12" of Neferata may march, even if she is not the general. Any friendly Undead unit within 12" suffers one less wound due to the Unstable special rule, or due to the death of the general, than it normally would.

Immortal Majesty

Such is the raw beauty of Neferata, her very presence can destroy the will of any mortal, all thoughts are reduced to a single choice: flee or obey.

All enemy units within 12" of Neferata suffer -1 Leadership. All enemy units within 6" of Neferata suffer a -2 penalty to their Leadership instead. This penalty is cumulative with any other modifiers, except for the Aura of Dark Majesty Vampiric Power.

Seduction

Neferata's unholy beauty and charisma can turn the hearts of the most steadfast warriors, making traitors of heroes and foot-kissers of kings.

At the start of any close combat phase, after challenges have been issued & the models moved, but before any blows are



Model by Brushmistress

struck, Neferata may attempt to seduce an enemy. Choose one enemy character in contact with Neferata. That model must pass a Leadership test or be seduced! He will direct his attacks (including attacks from mounts) against any enemy models in base contact (Neferata's controlling player chooses how to allocate these attacks), and will neither attack nor be attacked by models on Neferata's side.

The seduced model will join her unit at the end of that Close Combat round, before break tests are taken. This is an exception to the rule that models cannot join Unstable units. He may not leave the unit whilst under the effect of Seduction. He is treated as Unbreakable as long as he remains seduced. If it is impossible for him to join Neferata's unit (for instance, because he rides a Monster), then he must be placed within 6" of Neferata, and remain within 6" of her for the duration of the effect.

A seduced model is treated as part of Neferata's army until he passes a Leadership test at the start of one of his own side's turns. This test will be taken at his own basic Leadership value, it will not be affected by Inspiring Presence, but may be affected by other modifiers (such as Neferata's Immortal

Majesty). If he passes the test, he ceases to be subject to Seduction. If he is part of Neferata's unit he is placed 1" away from it. The model may act normally in that turn, but may not charge.

Neferata may seduce more than one model per game, which may result in several enemy characters acting under Neferata's control at once. She may not use the Beguile Vampiric Power in the same phase as attempting Seduction. Any model still under the effects of Seduction at the end of the game awards Victory Points as if they had been killed.

The Sisterhood

Neferata's network of spies and agents can be employed to sow confusion behind enemy lines, disrupting carefully laid battle plans.

After both sides have deployed (including Scouts & after moving Vanguard units) Neferata's controlling player may redeploy one enemy unit within 12" of its current position, following all normal deployment rules. The Dagger must pass a Toughness test or be unable to attack in that phase.

Dagger of Jet (Magic Weapon)

Neferata's ceremonial blade takes the form of the Serpent Goddess Wadjet's needle-fang. Sacrificial victims' bodies were flooded with a searing venom before expiring, giving their blood a most piquant flavour.

Poisoned Attacks. Any model which suffers one or more unsaved wounds from the Dagger must pass a Toughness test or be unable to attack in that phase.

Bastet (Arcane Item)

Neferata's familiar takes the form of a spectral black cat, an avatar of the stealthy goddess Bastet.

Bastet may be positioned anywhere within 18" of Neferata at the start of her Magic phase. She may cast any spells using the position of Bastet for purposes of line of sight and range. In addition, Neferata can curse a unit with the Cat Goddess' ire:

Curse of Bastet

(Bound Spell, Power Level 4)

Curse of Bastet is a hex with a range of 12" (measured from Bastet). If successfully cast the target unit will count all natural 6s when rolling to Hit, Wound and Save as 1s. This effect lasts until Neferata's next magic phase.

Crimson Gem of Lahmia

(Arcane Item, see Warhammer Armies: Vampire Counts, p.86)

Palanquin

Neferata may be mounted on a palanquin borne into battle by four Grave Guard. The palanquin is mounted on a 40x40mm base.

Neferata & her palanquin move and fight as if they were a single cavalry model, but their unit type remains Infantry for purposes of joining units, "Look Out Sir!" etc.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
4	3	0	4	4	1	3	4	6

Special Rules: Undead, Wight Blades

the fête

Written by Onikaigo

"Raptors were all the rage in the dying midsummer months. With the creeping invasion of chill winds, the last gasp of summer was the Fête, held where ocean meets the land; a joining of two worlds. There, commoners mingle with royalty over cobblestones slick with moisture and wine; noblemen brush shoulders with stable boys, serving girls and knights look out upon a sea of feathered frivolity from behind coloured glass eyes, views biased toward greens, reds and yellow, stained glass vision as clear as their gold allows. Paupers bore simple carved effigies vaguely in shape of hawks or peregrines, while nobles or merchants seem almost grotesque when they flouted capes of brilliantly imported feathers sewn in prismatic patterns. There is never a single man, woman or child without a mask; all hide their features behind carved wood, silver, or bone. To show your real face in the End Summer Fête is horribly bad luck. On that night, the End Summer Fête, all are equal, all hide their identity. "

The scholar takes a moment to collect himself, grasping his tankard of water as the assembly awaits the story to continue. He stands before the assembled nobles of the city, with citizens crowding the entry way, and children sitting in the windows unashamedly listening to the proceedings. The Scholar is dressed in wrinkled blue robes, his eyes have dark bags underneath them, and his hands shake with nervous emotion. After a short drink, he quickly licks his dry lips with the motion of a lizard and continues his tale.

"For the Honored Lords not native to our fair land, our tradition states that all festivals occur under darkness, illuminated only by torches and lamps. The flames must be lit with sea oil, but on that overcast night they did very little good. Pockets of shadow followed movement as cut-purses and sneak thieves; predators were ever present in the midst of the festival. From a superior vantage point the predators must have been obvious, much like stones in the river, the citizens must have broken around them like water with the occasional drunkard vanishing into the alleyways, to be found come dawn with either throat or purse slit no doubt. Such is a day in the life of the Empire when not at war." The Scholar rubs a hand across his eyes,

breathing deeply as he speaks again, his voice strong, but his eyes far, far away. "There were storm clouds gathering over the docks, though harbouring neither rain nor sleet, they manifested as a subtle chill in the small of the spine, a too cool breeze past the ear, the fine hairs at the back of the neck stand on edge. I remember moving to the centre of the roads, instinct also drove the hawks, eagles and peregrines to avoid the shadows, falcons clung like babes to the lamp posts, and at length even the predators found themselves ill at ease; feeling the presence of a predator greater than themselves."

"I remember the Raven. She made her first appearance out of an alleyway, mingling with a handful of laughing merlins; her elegant black mask marking her apart from her fellows. Her mask was resplendent; sable shaded feathers shimmered black and green.... a mask for the very wealthy. Her face below was painted white with startlingly red lips, flawless in every way. Her hair fell from behind her shoulders, a bistre curtain that shimmered in the torchlight. She was the most beautiful person I've ever seen, Milords. Even though I know not her face, she was the definition of perfection. Her black dress sported several more feathers, though I must admit what drew my eyes was a red stone, nestled between her breasts, at strong contrast to the rest of her splendid attire. Obviously a very real, and very expensive gem, she wore it with no regard to the thieves or her own wellbeing. She was neither brave, nor foolish, as I shall reveal. She had no reason to be afraid of any man or Knight that was present that night."

"As she exited the alley, she stumbled, as if leaning on her company for support. They rocked into the crowd with an audible impact. For a moment, all is chaos as men and women pick themselves up, correct their attire and shout good natured insults at the clumsy merlins, but the Raven cannot be found. She has simply melted into the crowd, even as the stunned raptors bring themselves to their feet she is gone; though her friends seem to not miss her company even the slightest as they melt into the crowd with their newfound companions, ignorant of just how quickly their world is going to change. How quickly hell can be loosed. "

"It is only moments later I heard the screams begin. I have never heard suffering to match. Such pain, fear, terror....I wish no man to ever make that sound again. It was almost drowned under the cacophony of flute, song, and merrymaking, and it could have almost passed unnoticed save for the physical reaction in the crowd. Men and women scattered like roaches from an open flame. I was unable to see the initial source, but alarm gripped me like any other man with that unearthly scream. I found myself unable to move, my feet were rooted to the cobblestones as men and women streamed by me in a flood, fear written plainly on their faces. I... I was knocked over. I was quite nearly trampled, Milords. It was all I could do to move to the side of the road, under the awning of Sigmar in what I believe was a potters shop. It was from there, after I crawled in behind the counter, that I saw everything."

"The Raven was not human, no human woman could cause so much devastation, and her soul could not allow it. What I saw was a beast, a monster in human skin. The injured and dead were many, I would guess at a dozen, maybe more, though it hadn't been more than moments. She stood, cradling a young merlin with her left arm, graceful, yet strong enough to have her feet off of the ground by several inches. The Raven, that beast! She had her lips sealed tight just below the young woman's collarbone, with blood escaping and staining the stones beneath her feet, but I knew what she was doing without a doubt. Milords," The scholar speaks with a deep, final voice; "She was drinking from the wound. I had discovered that there was a Vampire in our midst, and her name is Raven. I hid, Milords. I fell to my face behind the potter's bench, and held my hands over my ears. I could not bear the sounds of struggle, or of the dying sounds of that poor, poor soul who yet lived. I do not know how long I lie there, in truth. I lost track of time, and I dare not sleep for fear of the Raven coming over the counter to devour me as she did the others outside, if she approached I know not what I could have done...but at least I would die fighting."

"The Watch arrived soon after, the sound of their hobnails reached through my fogged mind. At the sound of their boots, I thought that my salvation had come; I began to rise from my position. At first, all was as to be expected. My head broke the threshold of the counter, and I found a small company of guardsmen on the scene, quickly spreading out to check for wounded, or the criminal herself. This lasted only moments, and I was about to call out to

them, to speak of what I had seen when I saw her on the rooftop across the way. She was beautiful, standing proud and defiant, yet horrifying with blood still on her lips and her hands in feral claws. Without a sound, she fell on the nearest pair of soldiers, and I fell back to the floor knowing that no matter what aid I offered through my voice the soldiers were doomed. I am sorry, truly I am for those lives I may have saved at the cost of my own...but I think there were none. The Raven was truly unstoppable."

"The sounds that reached my ears were hellish. I heard the screams of men, the bestial cry of the Raven as she demolished the soldiers as they came. The clash of metal on stone as weapons struck only air and earth, the screech of ringmail tearing, the chimes of falling steel rings like rain on the road...I heard it all, Milords. I dare not see for myself, but the damage was evident. Well over a dozen citizens, plus a company of soldiers were destroyed by that beast in a single night, and she vanished without a sound and unharmed; there was no blood on the soldier's weapons! Of a dozen well trained soldiers, none managed a wound on the abomination!"

The scholar is wracked with shakes, the water in his tankard spilling over the side until he manages to place it on the table. His eyes flicker wildly to the left and right as he remembers the ghastly scene. Seemingly bloodless, his pale skin is drawn and tight over his skull to make him look almost like a cadaver. With what appears to be a supreme effort of will, the Scholar collects himself with several deep breaths, then manages to look at the assembled lords without shaking visibly.

"Milords, this city is not well. All the victims of the attack must be burned immediately before they rise as servants of that fiend. All who were wounded, but not killed must be put to the sword. Every building in the city must be searched to the very earth it stands on during the daylight hours for this fiend. There is a Vampire loose in the city, Milords. May Sigmar help us if we cannot find her before she strikes again... and may Sigmar help us if we do find her."

---Account of the Scholar Vidici on the Summers End Slaughter

Army Showcase

A Vampire Counts Army by Busted Brush







knowledge is power

Written by Capt Rubber Ducky

vampire counts and 8th edition magic lores

The magic phase has changed greatly with this new edition. Less reliable stores of power dice, bonuses to cast and far more powerful spells than in the last edition. Here I'll take a look at some of these lores we can take in our army, and some of the spells within them.

With the new magic phase it is more important than ever to not fail to cast a spell (unless it's the last one you're throwing), firstly because your wizard would no longer be able to cast but also because it wastes your limited supply of power dice and doesn't waste any of your opponents dispel dice, increasing the strength of your opponents defence in effect. (The same goes for dispelling). You can take more risks on the last spell as the wizard can't cast any more anyway.

Firstly though, a few ways to squeeze these new lores into a Vampire Counts army. The vampire power Forbidden Lore allows us to take an entire lore from the fantasy rule book (bar life), on a lord level character this can be combined with either Dark Acolyte or Master of the Black arts (or something else if you're not going for a full out caster). Dark Acolyte will give you a stronger magic defence and a greater bonus to cast, but Master of the Black Arts will give you more power dice potentially making for a more powerful offence. Vampire thralls can also be equipped with Forbidden Lore but with only +1 to cast they will struggle to get the bigger spells off, unless used by a 'suicide vamp' equipped with a Power Scroll to get that one big spell off once, and risk being cast into the realms of Chaos for doing so. And now onto the magic Lores:

The Lore of Fire

A magic lore full of direct damage spells, magic missiles and spells that will generally make you take hits (nearly all Strength 4 as it happens), all good for dealing out ranged damage. However I don't think it is a great choice for Vampire Counts myself, yes it could make up for our lack of shooting but as a combat army we need to be getting into combat with our enemies, and once in combat you are no longer able to cast many of the spells.

Fire Ball

Your standard damage spell can be increased in power twice, adding range and extra hits. But with it only being Strength 4 it can't do much against high armour and toughness, but could be good for taking out small units and stuff with regeneration or just doing a few wounds to units.

Cascading Fire-Cloak

A spell for when you do get into combat with your enemies, should be good for wearing down your opponents but as with fireball will struggle against high toughness and high armour saves. Could be good if you are planning to engage more than one unit as every unit will take hits.

Flaming Sword of Rhuin

Not the greatest augment spell in the world, you'd be better off with a strength bonus from another magic lore than the bonus to wound (we don't have any shooting), and we already have a very cheap banner that gives us flaming and magical attacks. Though if you are set on the lore of fire this could be used to effect against flammable enemies like Tree Men or Mummies.

The Burning head

Not a spell that will do much damage from your lines, only gaining a few wounds. It has a chance of causing panic among your enemies but with new Battle Standard rules they will most likely pass the required Leadership test.

Piercing Bolts of Burning

The problem I have with this spell is firstly that if the unit isn't 5 models wide (say ogres) it will do no damage at all and secondly with units being played as 10 models wide hordes the number of ranks won't be very large so it won't do that much damage at all compared to the size of the unit.

Fulminating Flame cage

Now then this spell can do some serious damage to enemy units. The bigger unit you can cast it on the better, but it has one fundamental flaw - the enemy can choose not to move in order to avoid it and as we have no shooting as an army there is not much reason for them to move after it's been cast. However you can cast it into combat meaning the enemy will be forced to take the hits if they break (but applying 'sod's' law you'll run them down anyway.)

Flame Storm

Another direct damage spell, this one places a template over your opponent. The problem with this is that when cast, you then roll a scatter dice meaning potentially the template can move. This is the problem with all spells like this one, as it is very easy for the template to move off your opponent all together or reduce the number of hits you gain significantly, making the spell very hit and miss like quite a lot of the spells in this law. To avoid the 'hit and miss' it's best used against a big unit to reduce the chances of the spell not hitting many enemies. I found this spell quite disappointing compared to some of the final spells in other magic lores.

The Lore of Beasts

This lore is full of character buffs with a few other nice spells, when combined with things like Infinite Hatred and Red Fury these can create some really powerful combat monsters. It also has a couple of nice augment and hex spells to help out our units.

Wyssan's Wildform

This spell gives a nice boost to our core infantry, bringing ghouls up to the same toughness as a Varghulf which is something that should definitely not be sniffed at! You

can't however use it as an area effect which is a shame but at least it is a signature spell. I think the spell is best used to strengthen a battle line in a certain place or do that extra bit of damage. It is also more effective if used on larger units giving strength boosts on more attacks.

The Flock of Doom

Even with the reasonably impressive name, the spell isn't really that impressive. Best used for taking out small skirmishers (if you're lucky) and maybe war machine crews, the spells range can be extended so you can get at them.

Pann's Impenetrable pelt

Good for keeping a character alive when he's going up against something that would have a chance of killing him, but I think there are better spells that can be cast with the limited power pool. I can see a few situations where the area effect will come in especially useful though. It could be used to trap an enemy combat character in a challenge with a Wight king or similar, as the toughness 8 should be a pain in the rear to deal with for most characters.

The Amber Spear

Well if you took this magic lore for this spell then you should really consider another army, with bolt throwers. Though it does have one good use which is taking out monsters, especially the powered up version though it is still quite hit and miss, especially if the monster has regeneration.

The Curse of Anraheir

This is best cast (quite obviously) on a unit that will have to go through terrain in its next move, however choose your targets wisely, try to aim for units that will be at a serious tactical disadvantage if they don't move so you can capitalise on it, or alternatively they can lose a third of their unit, either way would be fine by me. It can also be used on units for the negatives to hit but if I had the choice I would rather use Wyssan's Wildform unless you aren't sure which unit they will attack.

The Savage Beast of Horros

This spell can turn a feeble necromancer into a strong fighting hero (though he can't take a lot of damage still). When combined with Red Fury can give even more extra damage as the effects of the extra attacks will nearly be doubled and the extra strength helps to make sure you get the extra

attacks. This spell also has the added bonus of being able to be made into an area effect, but this drastically increases the casting value so be sure to make sure it's worth powering up. If just casting it on one model will be enough then save the power dice to use elsewhere.

Transformation of Kadon

Now this can potentially be a very powerful spell (especially as it's been FAQ'd that we would keep vampire powers such as Red Fury and Spectral Form), the problem being is you cease to be a wizard while transformed so you can no longer channel dispel dice or dispel spells in your opponents magic phase. Changing yourself into a red fire dragon is all very fancy but casting The Savage Beast of Horros on yourself gives you the same strength and only one less weapon skill and attack and it is considerably easier to cast. Though if you're low on wounds and think you're about to die it might be a nice trick to increase your life expectancy, but then casting an Invocation of Nehek could work as well. It is very tempting to take a vampire thrall with power scroll and turn into a large dragon, that is until you opponent dispels the remains in play of course.

The Lore of Metal

This lore is very good against heavily armoured enemies, but with having to specify which lore you're using on your army list, you run the risk of coming up against a very lightly armoured enemy. Unless of course you're tailoring a list to fight a certain army (something I personally don't like doing).

Searing Doom

I think this spell is best deployed against small enemy hammer units such as cavalry, I doubt it would have much impact on a larger unit to make up for the high casting value. If you're casting the powered up version always consider Final Transmutation, as it has a lower casting value and is likely to do more damage against larger units.

Plague of rust

This can be quite the irritant for your opponent, as it isn't that powerful but reduces their armour save for the entire game (which does stack). They are likely to try and dispel it, drawing out there dispel dice making it easier for you to get some more potent spells through.

Enchanted Blades of Aiban

Best employed against enemies with high saves in combination with plague of rust to bring their armour save down very low, giving you chance to get at the fleshy bits underneath. Though still not the best augment as I personally would prefer a strength bonus.

Glittering Robe

Now this is an excellent spell for keeping our infantry standing, giving Grave Guard (hand weapon and shield) the save of a Bretonnian Knight, and giving Skeletons the same save as a Chaos Warrior with shield and gives Ghouls, well, a save. It also comes with the ability to affect everyone nearby giving a big boost to a large portion of your army.

Gehenna's Golden Hounds

This looks like quite a strange spell to me, it isn't great for character killing as they still gain 'look out sir' roll and it can only target a single model so shots will probably be wasted against rank and file. It would be good for trying to take out unit champions so they can't try to challenge our characters, and so we could challenge enemy characters with more ease.

Transmutation of Lead

I don't think the effect of this spell is worth its high casting value, and I think it would be of limited use, there are easier ways to reduce armour saves and better things to cast then giving a unit a ballistic skill negative. The negative bonus on weapon skill is always quite situational and doesn't usually make that much difference, well not compared with what the power dice could do instead of casting this spell.

Final Transmutation

Wipe out a third of a unit, one in six chance of killing any characters in the unit; enemy units with 12" of target have Stupidity, yes please. This is one powerful spell, especially when used against large units of which more are springing up with the new horde formation rules. I would always try to get this spell of if there is a large enough suitable enemy unit to cast it on, unless there is a more pressing need for the power dice elsewhere.

The Lore of Light

A pain to fight against as damage spells do an extra D6 damage against us (and daemons) and a lore I've never been sure we should be able to take but you've got to know your enemy after all. It comes with some powerful unit buffs and a couple of nice hexes, generally a magic lore that will do well against many armies.

Shem's Burning Gaze

A direct damage spell but not usually that potent, best employed against small lightly armoured units in a hope of making them panic, can be powered up to increase range and strength which could be used to take out monsters but comes with a high casting value.

Pha's Protection

When used in combination with The Speed of Light this spell could leave your opponents hitting on 6's in close combat and at worse 5's for the likes of Chaos Warriors. This can drastically reduce the amount of damage you can take in close combat reducing your opponent's combat resolution significantly, as well as reducing your casualties. The spell can affect an area for a reasonably higher casting value.

The Speed of Light

A very nice spell that will most likely make your opponents hit on 5's and make you definitely hit on 3's as well. The initiative boost will make sure you can get all your attacks in unless you're up against Always Strikes First in which case you'll stop them getting their re-rolls to hit. It can be used to make up for the generally sub-par values of our weapon skill and initiative. It can be powered up for an area effect with a suitably higher casting value.

Light of Battle

Not much use at all really, we're immune to psychology and can't flee in the first place, the only use I can see would be casting them on a frenzied or stupid unit but I think power dice can be used far better elsewhere.

Net of Amyntok

This spell would be best used against a unit you want to keep in place but have no other means in doing so, as it's quite risky using this spell so you should be prepared for them to pass the test and move or shoot anyway. Though I don't think using power dice to not be shot at is the best use of them as our army is very good at taking the damage and we can't panic.

Banishment

Another direct damage spell, I think we will struggle to take advantage of the bonus strength modifiers, so it won't do that much damage against high toughness and heavily armoured troops, but could be used for taking out small lightly armoured units and try to force a panic check. Should be helpful against things that rely on ward saves as these must be re-rolled if passed.

Birona's Timewarp

This is a powerful spell but you will have to carefully plan to be able to take advantage of the doubled movement, but the rest of the spell is still nothing to be sniffed at. When combined with the speed of light, the combination should make you strike first and re-roll to hit with additional attacks making for a potent combat unit. Although combining all the buff spells makes for a very good chance of winning a combat but ask yourself, do I need to cast all these to win the combat, or can power dice be better used elsewhere? This spell as well comes with an area effect, but the massive casting value makes it one of the hardest spells to cast in the entire rulebook.

The Lore of Life

This will be quick...we can't take it. Oh well, you can't have everything!

The Lore of Heavens

More damage spells here, along with a few hexes and argument spells and some just plain weird ones. I'm not really sure what this lore should be used against other than flyers (see attribute), though it does seem to work quite well against gun line armies.

Iceshard Blizzard

Another hex spell that can either help you out in combat, or against shooting. Though as it can only be cast once it won't be much help against gun lines, and against small amounts of shooting our army can just absorb it. The negative in combat could be helpful and the negative leadership can help panic a unit if you later target it with damage spells from the lore.

Harmonic Convergence

A very nice combat buff that can be amplified even more if combined with Grave Guard with the Banner of the Barrows and Great Weapons (Helm of Commandment would be good as well), meaning two's to hit followed by two's to wound and re-rolling one's to hit and wound, the only problem

being with that combination is you've probably already got the combat won and it's just overkill at that point.

Wind Blast

Now this is a spell I struggle to find a use for, moving your opponent backwards a couple of inches won't make that much difference (and with no shooting we want to get into combat with them anyway), admittedly this spell could do some damage but there are better damage spells you could cast.

Curse of the Midnight

Wind

A nice little hex spell that can annoy your opponent and protect you from Killing Blows. It may also get you a few more kills. I wouldn't rely on this spell to turn combat in your favour though as it isn't that potent, and they may roll high enough again anyway. The best use for this spell in my opinion is against enemies with Killing Blow.

Urannon's Thunderbolt

A direct damage spell that causes a small number of high strength hits, best used against small units of tough warriors, or possibly against monsters. It won't kill them out right but could do enough damage to help your troops take them out.

Comet of Casandora

I've never been fond of this spell, slightly too random for me but it should work well against a stationary army like a gun line, and should wreak havoc among war machines with each one taking hits separately. It does have the potential to do some serious damage to armies in general, the problem

is that it isn't concentrated on one unit but across the army, mitigating the damage of it.

Chain Lightning

Now this is another spell that is quite random, but it has the potential to do loads of damage but no more than Urannon's Thunderbolt to every separate target unit. It should also wreak havoc with gun lines, having the potential to hit multiple war machines. The problem once again is that it doesn't concentrate on one unit but the damage is once again mitigated across the entire army.

The Lore of Shadows

The lore of shadow is full of hex and augment spells, plus a couple of direct damage spells.

It also comes with a nice attribute helping to keep you caster out of danger as he's able to swap places with another character after he has cast a spell. It is also the only lore that has hexes that will reduce a stat by more than one with a single casting. This disadvantage however is that it can't be



powered up to be an area affect, effecting more than one enemy.

Melkoth's Mystifying Miasma

This spell can be used in several different ways and in several situations. It allows you to either reduce an enemy unit's weapon skill, ballistic skill, initiative or movement. As it's possible to reduce each stat by more than one, it could have a big effect reducing the ballistic skill of a large bowmen unit, though unless it's going to get a lot of shots (more than about 20) then I don't think it's worth the power dice. Now reducing the enemy's initiative can interact really well with a casting on pit of shade in the same magic phase to cause the enemy to take many more casualties.

Steed of Shadows

At first this doesn't look like the best spell in the world, it could be good for getting out of trouble but you can't use it on yourself if you're already stuck in combat, well you can but it will do nothing. What you can do though is cast it on another character, move them to a place you want the wizard casting this spell, then take advantage of the lore's attribute and switch places.

The Enfeebling Foe

This spell is best used to try and give yourself the upper hand in combat, increasing the number of wounds your opponent will take, best used in a combat that you are not certain of winning or in one where it is critical that you must win. This is also a remains in play spell so it may waste some of your opponents power dice in their magic phase (always a good thing), or it will continue as long as you want/can keep the caster alive, so it may be good for drawn out combats as well.

The Withering

This spell is similar to 'The Enfeebling Foe' apart from reducing your opponents strength, but it is better to cast this spell to keep your troops standing for longer (both making it harder for them to wound you and stopping them reducing your save as much, making it slightly better combat resolution wise then 'The Enfeebling Foe') and 'The Enfeebling Foe' for killing your enemy faster. It would also be better to use this one if they are getting more attacks on you then you are on them. There are very many variables to consider when comparing these two; I could go on for pages, but I won't.

The Penumbral Pendulum

Another spell that extends along a line but isn't powerful enough to use the 'suicide vamp tactic' (see introduction). I think there are limited uses for this spell, it would be quite good for killing war machines and monsters, but it will most likely take two shots and at its reasonably high casting value it probably won't be happening. However if you can get a caster safely onto the flank (Steed of Shadows could help) it should work well against monstrous infantry as well.

The Pit of Shades

Although it falls for the same template problems I talked about in 'Flame Storm' the outcome of a hit with the Pit of Shades can potentially be more deadly against more types of enemies. When combined with Initiative modifiers it can be very potent indeed. I find its best used against heavily armoured high toughness units as their expensive save and toughness is wasted.

Okkam's Mindrazor

Not a great spell for us really, many of our units have leadership the same or less then there strength and even when it is high it usually isn't by much. But the thought of 40 attacks from strength 5 ghoul is quite

a scary one. The primary way to make this spell truly worthwhile is using in combination with the general's leadership bubble, so a Vampire Lord nearby would generate Strength 10 attacks! Once again it is best to cast this on a large unit to make up for not gaining as much strength as other armies. Careful if you're using this spell and 'The Enfeebling Foe' as casting this might make you wound on two's anyway, so having cast 'The Enfeebling Foe' would have been a waste of your power dice.

The Lore of Death

The lore we can dish out with the most power in my eyes as we have the special character Mannfred letting us take it along with being a level 4 and gaining plus 2 dice for Master of the Black Arts (as well as the option for 2 arcane items which could mean +6 to cast in larger games!)

This lore is excellent for hero sniping, with 3 spells which can target them even while they are in units! It also comes with a couple of nifty hex spells as well and just to finish it off, a giant purple sun! It also comes with a nice attribute to gain more power dice for causing wounds, although there is no easy way to cause a lot of them so it is not often as good as it first sounds.

Spirit Leech

I've found this spell is excellent for sniping off hero level characters quickly, as their lower unmodified leadership and less wounds means that a leadership 10 Vampire Lord can bring them down with comparative ease. This can really help your army by taking out the enemy's battle standard bearer, meaning that enemy units more likely to fail fear tests later in the game. Out of the 'sniping' spells, this is also the best for taking out monsters as they generally have lower leadership but higher strength and toughness values. Characters with wards of regeneration can really be irritating as they still benefit from saves against this spell, potentially saving them from death.

Aspect of the Dreadknight

Not the most useful spell in the lore of death as our entire army already causes fear, the powered up version might come in useful against fear causing enemies, or when combined with a charge from Vanhel's Danse Macabre in the same magic phase to force a terror test. You could use it to force a terror test in your next movement phase, but it would most likely rely on your opponent not charging you or moving into your charge range.

The Caress of Laniph

The least powerful anti-character spell, good for finishing off a character low on wounds but it would struggle to take one out from starting strength without a reasonable dose of luck. As with Spirit Leech it is reduced in effectiveness by enemy wards or regeneration.

Soulblight

This has to be one of my favourite spells in the entire rulebook, although not the most powerful hex, the ability to increase the range to every enemy within 24" is very powerful, potentially affecting the entire enemy army! It can bring mighty Saurus Warriors down to a level worse than that of our Ghouls. The powered up version does come with an appropriately high casting value however, so always check that it will affect enough enemies to make it worth the power dice required to cast it.

Doom and Darkness

Another hex spell, this spell can be used to help your opponent fail their fear test giving you the upper hand in combat, then assist them in failing their break test so you can run them down as well. As the unit's leadership value is reduced a Banshee can also do more wounds against the target of

the spell. Unfortunately the spell can't be powered up to have an area effect

The Fate of Bjuna

Another powerful character targeting spell, I've found this spell to be very damaging, especially against lower toughness armies, it can easily take out Lord level characters that lack a ward save and even take out some which don't, with a small bit of luck. If the character does survive the ordeal he is then subject to Stupidity which you could then capitalise on with the Doom and Darkness spell or alternatively finish the character off with another character 'sniping' spell. The weakness of this spell however is that it is short ranged and it cannot be powered up any further (quite rightly so).

The Purple Sun of Xereus

An immensely powerful vortex spell with a matching casting value. The best way to get this spell off successfully though is not with a lord character in your lines, as firstly there's a risk you'll roll a misfire and it will blow a hole in your own unit and secondly as it travels in a straight line it won't hit as much as you would like. However if you take a Vampire hero with the Power Scroll and some kind of movement bonus (be it a Hellsteed or the Talisman of the Lynci) and get onto

your opponent's flank. Then cast it with the power scroll, (98.5% chance of irresistible force and miscast when using 6 dice) the Purple Sun can do an enormous amount of damage, well more than the two hundred or so points for the vampire. This tactic doesn't work so well against high initiative enemies however.

So that about wraps it up. Hopefully this little run down will help you choose the lore that will work best for you when creating your army, but remember, don't be afraid to experiment and try something new!



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battle report

Death at Dawn Vampire Counts vs Beastmen - 6500pts

By Yanda

Scenario: Dawn Attack

This issue Yanda faced off in a massive 6500pts battle to try and prove that Vampire Counts still have what it takes to win in the 8th edition. With the scenario set as Dawn Attack it would be an even battle, a trust test of whether VC still has what it takes.



VAMPIRE COUNTS

Vampire Lord - Level 3

+Master of the Black Arts, Forbidden Lore, Summon Ghouls
+Flayed Hauberk, Crown of the Damned, The Book of Arkhan
+Extra Magic Level
+Deployed in GG2
+Spells: Invocation of Nehek + All of Lore of Fire

Vampire Lord- Level 2

+Infinite Hatred, Red Fury, Dread Knight
+Hand of Dust, Dragon Helm, Ogre Blade
+Deployed in Black Knights
+Spells: Invocation of Nehek, Vanhel's Danse Macabre, Wind of Undeath

Vampire - Level 1

+Dread Knight, Infinite Hatred
+Blood Drinker
+Deployed in Blood Knights
+Spells: Invocation of Nehek, Raise Dead

Vampire - Level 1

+Summon Ghouls, Dread Knight
+Helm of Commandment, Enchanted Shield
+Deployed in GH2
+Spells: Invocation of Nehek, Vanhel's Danse Macabre

Konrad von Carstein

See VC army book for details

Wight King - Battle Standard Bearer

+Drakenhof Banner
+Barded Skeletal Steed, Lance
+Deployed in GG1

Necromancer - Level 1

+Power Stone
+Deployed in GH3
+Spell: Vanhel's Danse Macabre

Ghouls x40 (GH1)

+Ghast

Ghouls x28 (GH2)

+Ghast

Ghouls x25 (GH3)

+Ghast

Skeletons x30 (SK1)

Spears, Full Command

Skeletons x25 (SK2)

Full Command

Skeletons x25 (SK3)

Full Command

Zombies x 25 (Z1)

Zombies x 25 (Z2)

20 Grave Guard + Full Command + War Banner

Corpse Cart (CC1)

+Balefire

Corpse Cart (CC2)

+Balefire

Grave Guard x 30 (GG1)

+Great Weapons, Full Command
+War Banner

Grave Guard x 30 (GG2)

+Full Command
+Razor Banner (Armour Piercing)

Black Knight x15 (BKK)

+Barding, Full Command
+Banner of the Barrows

Wraiths x6 (CW)

+Banshee

Black Coach (BC)

Blood Knight x10 (BK)

+Full Command
+Royal Standard of Strigos

Varghulf (VF1)

Varghulf (VF2)

Army Comments

I fielded almost every model I own minus a few things that needed to be proxied for the Beastmen army. I went with 2 Vampire Lords, 1 of each core build type. I went with the lore of fire because the casting values are very low and I hope to be able to heal and cast fire spells every round so I need to spread my dice out effectively. The 2nd Vampire Lord is tooled up to help support the Black Knights vs Steadfast, they still might get tied up but they will be very hard to kill. I'm hoping Konrad can surprise me in one of the Skeleton groups.

BEASTMEN

Gorthor the Beastlord on Tuskgor Chariot

+Deployed in centre

Great-Bray - Level 4

+Skull of Rarkos, Blackened Plate ,Additional Hand Weapon, Ramhorn

+Deployed in UG1

+Spells: The Enfeebling Foe, The Withering, Pit of Shades, Okkam's Mindrazor

Wargor - Battle Standard Bearer

+Additional Hand Weapon, Heavy Armour, The Beast Banner

+Deployed in UG2

Bray-Shaman - Level 2

+Additional Hand Weapon, Shard of the Herdstone

+Deployed in UG1

+Spells: Soulblight , Purple Sun.

Bray-Shaman Level

+Additional Hand Weapon, Dispel Scroll, Power Stone

+Deployed in UG1

+Spells: Pann's Impenetrable, Transformation of Kadon.

Gorebull

+Additional Hand Weapon, Heavy Armor, Drag-onhelm) The Steel Claws

+Deployed in M1

Wargor

+Additional Hand Weapon, Heavy Armour, Obsidian Blade (No Armour Saves allowed)

+Deployed in B2

Ghorros Warhoof

Ungor x50 (Ug1)

Spears, Full Command

Ungor x36 (Ug2)

Spears, Full Command

Ungor x36 (Ug3)

Spears, Full Command

Ungor x36 (Ug4)

Spears, Full Command

Gor x30 (G1)

Additional Hand Weapons, Full Command

Gor x30 (G2)

Additional Hand Weapons, Full Command

Gor x30 (G3)

Additional Hand Weapons, Full Command

Ungor Raider x10 (UR1)

Ungor Raider x10 (UR2)

Minotaur x6 (M1)

Additional Hand Weapons, Full Command, Sword of Battle

Minotaur x6 (M2)

Additional Hand Weapons, Full Command, Sword of Might

Centigor x10 (C1)

Great Weapons, Full Command (Ghorros), Stubborn (Drunken)

Centigor x10 (C2)

Great Weapons, Full Command, Stubborn (Drunken)

Beastigor x30 (B1)

Great Weapons, Full Command
Totem of Rust

Beastigor x30 (B2)

Great Weapons, Full Command
War Banner

Razorgor Chariot (RC1)

Razorgor Chariot (RC2)

Cygor (Cy)

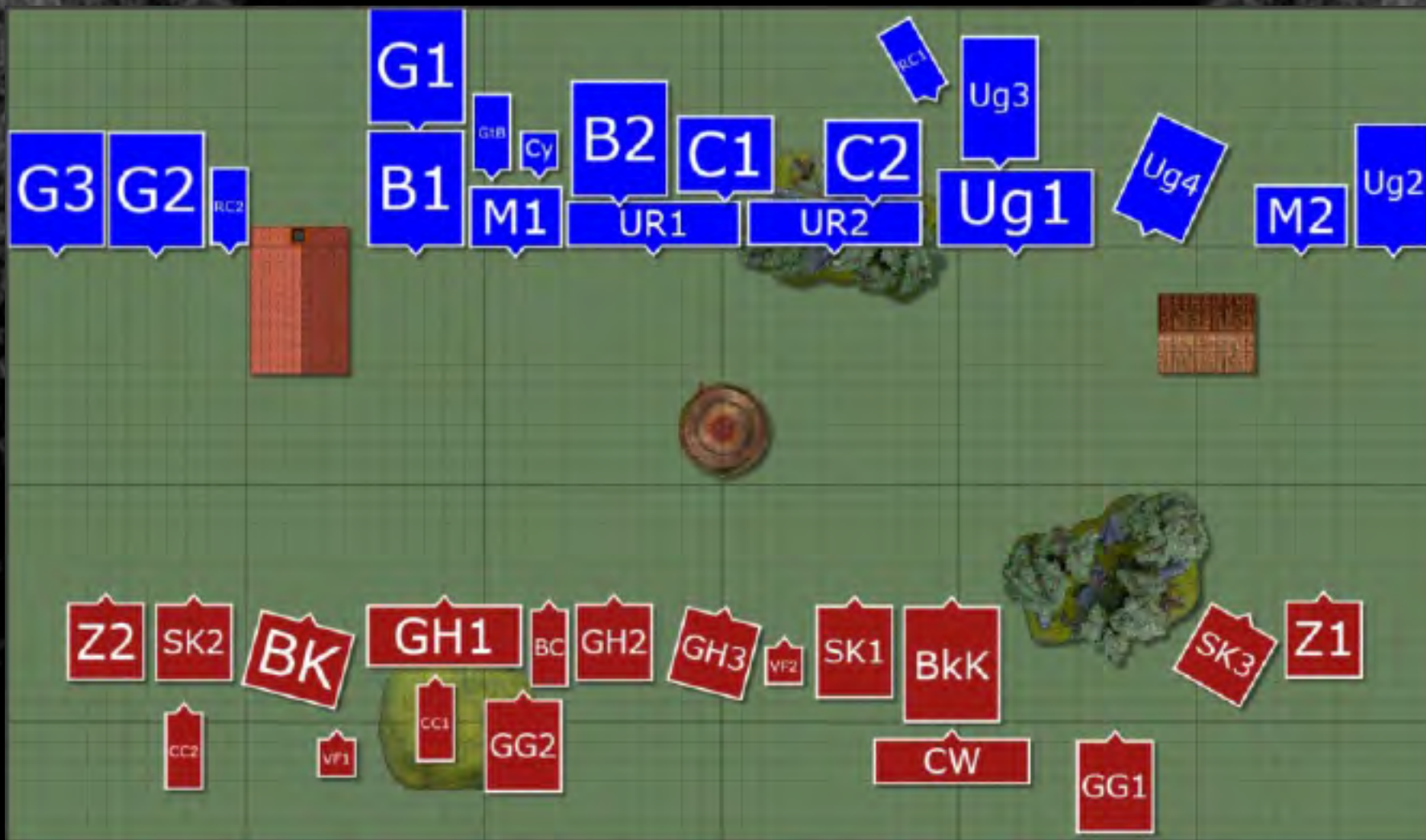
Army Comments

Gorthor the Beastlord is a great army general with his 18" Leadership bubble. It's effective to bump up the many Leadership 6 and 7 units that this list has. Sadly on a Chariot I've had bad luck with him getting targeted but I'm willing to give it another try. The casters are all in the same group to start as I don't know where each unit will be positioned on the table with Dawn Attack.

The Key to utilizing Beastmen magic is to have them close together so their items can give them bonuses, but as you can imagine it can be quite risky with miscasts so I'm going to try to spread them out as best I can, at least they rolled ridiculous for spells. I'm a big fan of the 2x Minotaur list, they may not get Primal Fury like the rest of the army but they get a lot of high STR attacks and just pound through infantry, Also basic magic weapons on the champs will allow them to easily kill anything ethereal. They would be a good target to ethereal tarpits if they didn't have the magic weapons.

The Bestigor unit with Totem of Rust is great against cavalry its -1 armour Save to all within 6"/-2 AS in base contact in addition to Strength 6 Great Weapons for a total of -5 to armour Saves (For real!). I've been struggling to get the Chariots into combat because in games past I've used more horde with this army and it's hard to get them into combat efficiently.

DEPLOYMENT



Terrain:

Bottom Right	Mysterious Forest (Fungus Forest)
Top Right	Building
Top Centre	Mysterious Forest (Venom Thicket)
Top Left	Building
Bottom Middle	Ordinary Hill
Middle	Wyrding Well

TURN ONE

Vampire Counts

Movement

Konrad is Frenzied, Zombies move up on sides while Skeletons get in position. Black Knights skim the edge of the forest and find out it's a Fungal Forest while the Varghulf moves west.

Vampire Lord Caster leaves GG2 to join GH3 to get in range for spells.

Magic

Both Hero Vampires fail Cygor test.

2 Power Dice to 5 Dispel Dice

Black Coach absorbs 0 dice.

Winds of Undeath (4 Dice + LvL 2 = 12) Dispelled (3 Dice = 15)

Fireball at Minotaurs (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 14) Dispelled (2 Dice = 15)

Invocation of Nehek on GH1 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 8 -> 6 Raised)

Book of Arkhan on GH3 (4) does not Explode. They move up 8".

Book of Arkhan on VF2 (2) Failed, does not explode. User can still cast, - Invocation of Nehek on GH3 (1 Dice, 2) Failed and cannot cast again this phase.

Necromancer w/ Power Stone to Vanhel's Danse Macabre on VF2 again, (3 Dice, Miscast/Irresistible) Miscast Chart -> 6 (Small Template, Strength 10 inc. the Wizard) 12 Ghouls die and Necromancer takes a wound.

Beastmen

Movement

Gor/Chariot Flank Move up to charge range.

Bestigors move up in hopes of baiting the blood knights into a nasty combat while the minotaurs get into position to hit the main ghouls group which it will devastate while keeping their options open.

UR2 takes 4 wounds from Forest, C1 also takes 1 wound.

The Minotaur/Ungor Flank move up and the characters scatter like a damaged Ant Hill. The Battle Standard Bearer and Great Bray Shaman move into UG4 while the Beasts Bray Shaman moves into UR2.

Magic

8 Power Dice (2+2, 3 in range of Herdstone +1 Channel) to 3 Dispel Dice (2, +1 Channel)

Black Coach absorbs 2 dice.

- Power Stone, Enhanced

Transformation of Kadon (20+) (4+2 Dice + LvL2 + 1 Beasts + 1 Item = 27) Shaman becomes a Great-Fire Dragon (Remains in Play)

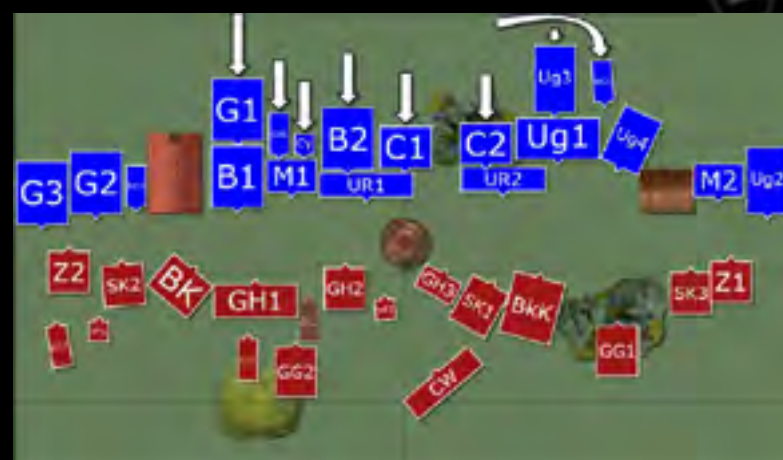
- Great-Bray casts The Withering on Black Knights, (2 Dice + LvL 4 + Item =

16) Failed Dispel (3 Dice, 10), -1 Toughness.

Shooting

Cygor throws a stone at the Black Coach with a direct hit (It's a large target so it didn't

need to throw "indirectly") The coach fails its Ward Save and takes D6 (4) wounds for being "under the hole", destroying it.



TURN TWO

Vampire Counts

Movement

Zombies and Konrad flank charge in, SK2 moves up instead of attempting a charge that would probably have failed. The Blood Knights pass a Frenzy test (Leadership 10) to avoid charging the Bestigors. GH2 side steps to the Right, this is not shown very well on the image as the movement is so small it doesn't get an arrow. GG2 move into the gap left by the sidestepping, ghouls and the Vampire Lord Caster goes back to GG2 as a bunker (At this point I see that using Vanhels on the Varghulf last turn was a bad idea as he had time to get into position).

Wraiths move up hoping to find an opening, while the Black Knights (-1 Toughness) charge the Ungor Raiders in what is likely the only time they will stand and not flee due to the fact that they now possess a Great Fire Dragon in the unit. SK3 backs up in hopes to bait the Minotaurs into a flank charge from the GG1. Zombies on the right charge those Ungors.

Magic

No one fails Cygor Leadership test
9 Power Dice (6+1+2) vs 7 Dispel Dice (6 + 1 Channel).

- Attempted Dispel of Transformation (PL 16), (4 Dice + LvL 3 = 22), Dispelled.

- Fireball at Minotaurs (Magic Resistance 1), (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 13), Dispelled (3 Dice + LvL 4 = 15).

- Piercing bolts of Burning on Bestigors (D3 Strength 4 Hits per Rank), (3 Dice + LvL 3 = 16) Dispelled (4 Dice + LvL 4 = 17)

Combat

(F+/- = Fear Test passed/failed,
PF+/- = Primal Fury Test passed/failed)
Helm of Commandment is used on Black Knights.
- Zombies vs Gors, (F+, PF-) Gors strike first killing (4), Zombies manage to kill (1), Zombies Crumble (3)

- Black Knights vs Ungor Raiders, (F-, PF+) Vampire Lord kills (1), Gains 1 Attack and kills (1). Ungors win roll-off but fail.

Black Knights kill (5) and force a break test and are destroyed, Black Knights Overrun into both UG1 and C2. UG1 and C2 skip Panic tests as they're now in combat.

- Zombies vs Ungors, (F+, PF-) Ungors kill (9) Zombies and another (10) crumble, leaving 6.

Beastmen

Movement

G2 + RC2 charge Konrad's skeleton group. Bestigors make a long Charge (15") with Movement 5 while the Minotaurs (Magic Resistance 1) charge the large GH1 Unit. Centigors charge Necromancer and GH3 but take 1 wound from the poisoned thicket but gain poisoned attacks for this round of combat as well as C2 in the Black Knight Combat. UG4 with the bsb and Great Bray flank charge the black knights. The Minotaurs with frenzy see the trap and would like to wait for the Ungors to finish off the zombies so they make a Leadership test to avoid charging the skeletons but fail with a re-roll.

Magic

11 Power Dice (5 + 4 + 2 item = 11) vs 6 Dispel Dice (5 + 1 Channel).

Gorthor generates (6) Purple Sun (Power Level 15/2 = 8).

- Okkam's Mindrazor cast on UG1 (5 Dice + LvL 4 + 1 Item = 24) Goes through.

- Gorthor's Purple Sun (4 Dice PL 16) Dispelled (5 Dice + LvL 3 = 28)

- Great Bray casts The Enfeebling Foe on Black Knights (2 Dice + LvL 4 + 1 Item = 10) Failed Dispel (1 Dice + LvL 3 = 7) Black Knights are now -1 Strength

and are still -1 Toughness from earlier in the game

Shooting

Cygor misfires and takes 1 wound as per his army rules. Ungor Raiders kill (1) from GH2.

Combat

- Gors vs Zombies (F+, PF+) Gors deal (8) wounds and Zombies crumble the remaining.

- Gors(F+, PF-)/Chariot(F+, PF-) vs Konrad/Skeletons. Konrad rolls stupidity this round. Chariot kills (5) Skeletons from impact hits.

Konrad manages to kill (2) Gors but fails Red Fury attacks. Gors deal (5) Wounds of which (2) make Armor Save/Ward Save. Razorgor gets Strength 6 on the charge and kills 3 more Skeletons. Bestigor on Chariot does (1) wound thanks to the 6" range of the Totem of Rust. Champion wasn't targeted and attacks back killing (1) Gor. 10 Skeletons crumble leaving Konrad and 4 Skeletons.

TURN TWO

- Bestigors vs Blood Knights/Blood Drinker Vamp (F+, PF-) Blood Drinker Vamp goes first killing (2), BK go next killing (12) Horse kills (1) Beastigors are steadfast but fail break test (Leadership 9) and are run down by the Blood Knights who overrun into G1. Gorthor is forced to take a panic test from being within 6" of the now destroyed Bestigors but makes his roll.

- Minotaur vs Ghouls , Steel Claws rolls a 6 for a total of 7 Attacks but only manages to kill (2). Minotaurs pick up the slack killing an additional (12) Ghouls which was expected. The Ghouls manage to do (3) thanks to poison and the Minotaurs make (1) save. (12) Ghouls crumble due to combat resolution. Minotaur gain Frenzy from Bloodgreed.

- Centigors vs Necro/Ghouls (F+, PF-) Ghorros flubs his rolls and only kills (1), Ghouls go next and deal (6) wounds but the Centigors make (3) Saves. The remaining Centigors strike back killing another (5). (5) Ghouls crumble leaving the necromancer as the lone model alive.

Massive Attack on Black Knights

- Centigors (F+, PF+) Ungor1 (F+, PF+) Ungor4 (F+, PF+). Combat Lord goes first dealing (2) wounds to Ungors and

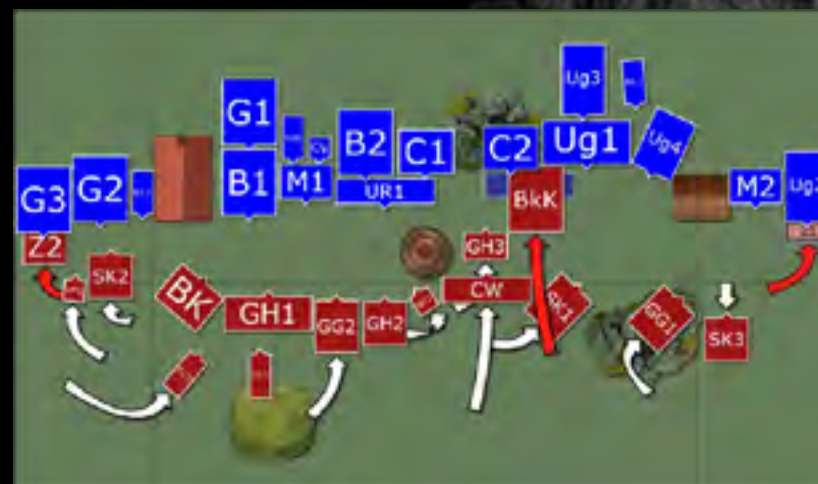
killing (1) more with Red Fury.

The Beastmen Battle Standard Bearer attacks, killing (2) Knights with some deadly Strength 6 Attacks thanks to the banner. The Great Bray also kills (2) with the help of the banner. The Ungors with Leadership 6 get 12 Attacks despite only having 3 models in base contact due to spears/horde and manage (8) Wounds of which only (3) are saved.

Luckily, some Black Knights were not in base contact and manage to kill (3) Centigors while a horse kills (1) more Ungor. The Knights crumble 8 which is just the amount of wounds left alive in the unit which is unfortunate. The Combat Lord was in contact with both the Centigor and Buffed Ungor unit and I was hoping for a very epic double Hand of Dust attack.

- Minotaur vs Skeletons , Minotaur roll something like 8 1's or 2's to hit it was so pathetic. They deal (6) wounds of which the Skeletons make (2) ward saves. They attack back dealing (2) wounds, (1) saved. (5) Skeletons crumble. Why couldn't this happen to the ghouls...?

- Ungors vs Zombies (F+, PF-) Ungors finish off the zombies.



TURN THREE

Vampire Counts

Movement

Varghulf charges in to aid Konrad, one of the Corpse Carts charges down the hill and hits one of the chariots (13").

GG2 Flank charge the Minotaurs while GH2 charges the Ungor Raiders who kill (3) on the stand and shoot. They had the range to hit the unit behind the raiders if they fled so they might as well stand and shoot.

Wraiths charge the Centigors hoping to best them in combat. GG1 finish there flank trap while the skeletons with spears make a daring flank charge into UG4.

Magic

All Casters pass Cygor Leadership test.

10 Power Dice (6 + 1 + 2 + 1 Channel) vs 7 Dispel Dice (6 + 1 Channel).

- Cascading Fire Cloak (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 11) Dispelled (3 Dice + LvL 4 = 13).

- Flaming Sword of Rhuin on Wraiths (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 12) Goes through.

- Book of Arkhan of GG2 (2 Dice = 4) Does not explode. Dispelled (1 Dice + LvL 4 = 8).

- Book of Arkhan on GG2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 9) Does not explode. Dispelled (2 Dice + LvL 4 = 9).

- Failed to use Corpse Cart's Miasma (2).

Shooting

Banshee fails to do any wounds on the Centigors.

Combat

(F+/- = Fear Test passed/failed, Konrad and Friends. (F+, PF+) Chariot (F+, PF-) Konrad does (1) wound to Gors who attack back killing (2) Skeletons and put (2) wounds on Varghulf. Bestigor kills (1) but the Razorgor misses big time. Varghulf and Corpse Cart combine for (3) stomp wounds. Vampire Counts win by 1 in combat resolution due to charging down the hill with the Corpse Cart. Gors fail break test and are run down by the Varghulf. Chariot makes its test keeping the rest of the combat going.

-Blood Knights vs Gors (F+, PF+) Blood Drinker Vampire only kills (1), Blood Knights kill (13), Horses kill (2). Stubborn break test Leadership 9 failed, pursue and overrun.

- Minotaur vs Ghouls/GG2, Steel Claws rolls 5 (D3 extra attacks) and kills 4 Ghouls, Minotaurs follow it up with (10) kills. GG2 with Flaming spell get 11 attacks and roll (8) 1's out of 11

dice. Both the Grave Guard and Ghouls crumble 8 destroying the Ghouls entirely. The Minotaur gain Frenzy +1 from Bloodgreed.

- Ghouls vs Ungor Raiders (F+, PF-) Vampire Caster Lord (1) Kill, HoC Vampire (2) Kills, Ghouls (5) Kills. Break test failed overrun into Bestigors.

-Wraiths vs Centigors/Ghorros (F+, PF+) Wraith do (5) wounds but Centigors make (1) Armor Save. Ghorros attacks back doing 3 wounds, each wound is multiplied into D3 wounds doing (5) wounds total killing 2 Wraiths and injuring another leaving a tied combat.

- Skeletons vs Ungors (F+, PF-) Ungors attack first killing (2) Skeletons. Skeletons attack backing dealing (2) wounds. Ungors lose combat by 2 and fail there break test as well as their re-roll from the Battle Standard. Skeletons pursue into UG1. A huge hit for BM as they loose there LvL 4 Caster and BSB. The Centigors nearby have to take a panic test from the destroyed UG4 and fails fleeing 9 inches which would be on the edge. However the UG3 Unit is there so they get bumped past them and off the table. UG3 is forced to take a panic test because a fleeing unit ran through them and they roll a 7 (LD 6) and also

flee off the table.

- GG/Skeletons vs Minotaur (1) Skeleton dead from impact hits, Minotaurs deal (8) wounds on Skeletons, (1) ward save. The Grave Guard only get (3) wounds on Minotaur. (1) more Skeleton gets stomped. Tied Combat, both have a Musician.

Beastmen

Movement

Gors Flank charge Konrad and his Skeleton friend.

Gorthor/Cygor dual flank charge into GG2. Razorgor Chariot Flank Charges GG1. Ungors on Flank fail there charge and move 1".

Magic

9 Power Dice (6 + 2 + 1 Item) vs 6 Dispel Dice.

Gorthos bound item is #2 The Caress of Laniph but there are no characters in his forward arc.

- "Death" Shaman casts Soulblight on Skeletons (3 Dice + LvL 2 = 9) needed a 9, Spell goes through.

- Purple Sun (6 Dice + LvL 2 = 12) Yup thats right, (4) 2's and (2) 1's. Guess I should have dispelled the first spell.

TURN THREE

Combat

- Konrad vs Gor/Chariot (F+, PF+ and F+, PF-, respectively) Konrad goes first dealing (2) wounds to the Razorgor Chariot. Each wound deals 2 Wounds for a total of (4) wounds, but we see how tough these chariots are. Gors manage to kill Konrad while the skeleton is killed by the Razorgor. The Corpse Cart, a long shot at finishing off the Razorgor but with a string of 6's it manages to finish off the Razorgor Chariot. The Corpse Cart takes (1) Crumble Wound.



- Minotaur and the Dual Flank -> Gorthor (F+, PF+), (3) GG die from Impact hits, another (2) from Gorthor and the Gorebull kills off (3). GG do (2) wounds to Minotaur who attack back wounding (10) but (1) AS and (3) 6+ Parry saves. Cygor with his Re-rolls on Undead kills (3) more which is enough to crumble the rest. The Minotaur gain Frenzy +2 from Bloodgreed, Everything Reforms towards the Blood Knights.

- Wraiths vs Ghorros (F+, PF-) Wraiths do just enough wounds to kill Ghorros.

- Ungor vs Debuffed Skeletons (F+, PF+) Bray Kills (1), Ungor kill (12) and the skeletons take (14) Crumbling leaving only 3.

- GG2 vs Minotaurs/Chariot (F+, PF+) The Chariot hits for (6) wounds but GG make (4) Regen saves from BSB. Minotaur kill (3) remaining skeletons. The Guard do (3) wounds to the

Minotaur and lose combat by 1 but take no crumbling because of the Battle Standard. The Minotaur gain Frenzy from Bloodgreed.



TURN FOUR

Vampire Counts

Movement

Gors pass terror test and charge Varghulf, Minotaurs fail there charge on the blood knights. Cygor flanks GH2 and UG2 Swift Reforms and heads to take on the wraiths.

Magic

Gorthor generates #4 Doom and Darkness PL 5.

5 Power Dice (4 +1) vs 4 Dispel Dice, (5 Dice = 18) Dispeled (4 Dice + LvL 3 = 18)

Combat

(F+/- = Fear Test passed/failed,

- Gors vs Varghulf (F- PF-) Gors do (1) Wound to Varghulf who kills (3) but crumbles to death. Gors overrun 8".

- Bestigors vs GH2 (F+, PF-) Vampire Lord does (1) Wound, Helm of Commandment Vampire does (2) wounds, Wargor hits Vampire Lord with (1) wound but she makes her ward save. Bestigors do (4) Wounds and Cygor adds another (5). The Ghouls respond by killing (3) Bestigors but lose combat and (5) Crumble.

- Minotaur/Chariot vs GG (F+, PF+) GG deal (3) wounds to the Minotaur

killing 1 and another 2 wounds to the chariot with their GW. The Minotaur do (10) Wounds and the GG make (6) Regeneration saves. Razorgor kills (1) Grave Guard and another dies to a Minotaur Stomp. The Guard win combat thanks to the War Banner and Battle Standard but fail to catch the Minotaur who failed their break test.

Beastmen

Movement

Blood Knights need 6 on 2 highest of 3d6 and fail moving up 1". Wraiths Cut down fleeing Ungors, Varghulf moves out of fleeing chariots vision ready to finish it off in turn 6. The Grave Guard run down the fleeing Minotaur.

Magic

Blood Drinker and Necromancer fail Cygor test.

11 Power Dice (4 + 4 + 2 + 1 Channel) vs 4 Dispel Dice.

- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 9) 5 Ghouls Raised

- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 10) 3 Ghouls Raised

- Invocation of Nehek on Ghouls (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 7) 4 Ghouls Raised

- Cascading Fire Cloak (3 Dice + LvL 3 = 17) Failed to Dispel (4 Dice = 12) 11 Hits, (7) Bestigors die, Cygor takes (1) wound.

- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (1 Dice + LvL 4) Failed (1)

- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (1 Dice + LvL 1) Failed (2).

Combat

- Bestigor vs GH2 (F+, PF-) Vampire Lord deals (2) wounds. Ghouls do (4) Wounds but Bestigors make (2) armour saves. Bestigors do (1) wound and Cygor does only (1) wound causing them both to take a Leadership 8/9 break test respectively but they both made their save.



TURN FIVE

Vampire Counts

Movement

Blood Knights need 6 on 2 highest of 3d6 and fail moving up 1". Wraiths Cut down fleeing Ungors, Varghulf moves out of fleeing chariots vision ready to finish it off in turn 6. The Grave Guard run down the fleeing Minotaur.

Magic

Blood Drinker and Necromancer fail Cygor test. 11 Power Dice (4 + 4 + 2 + 1 Channel) vs 4 Dispel Dice.

- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 9) 5 Ghouls Raised
- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 10) 3 Ghouls Raised
- Invocation of Nehek on Ghouls (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 7) 4 Ghouls Raised
- Cascading Fire Cloak (3 Dice + LvL 3 = 17) Failed to Dispel (4 Dice = 12) 11 Hits, (7) Bestigors die, Cygor takes (1) wound.
- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (1 Dice + LvL 4) Failed (1)
- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (1 Dice + LvL 1) Failed (2).

Combat

- (F+/- = Fear Test passed/failed,
- Bestigor vs GH2 (F+, PF-) Vampire Lord deals (2) wounds. Ghouls do (4) Wounds but Bestigors make (2)

armour saves. Bestigors do (1) wound and Cygor does only (1) wound causing them both to take a Leadership 8/9 break test respectively but they both made their save.

Beastmen

Movement

Gors Swift Reform and move in to threaten the Blood Knights. The Minotaur need a (5) on 2D6 but like the Blood Knights last round failed and move up 1". The Razorgor chariot rallies.

Magic

Gorthors bound spell is Purple Sun with Power Level 10. (6 Dice = Irresistable) No miscast as it's a bound spell, but Gorthor loses the ability to generate random lore of death spells. This kills off 2 Blood Knights as their Initiative 4 really helped.

Combat

Bestigors vs GH2 (F+, PF+) Vampire Lord does (2) wounds, Helm of Commandment Vampire adds another wound. Wargor hits Vampire lord with (2) wounds, but she makes (2) Ward Saves. Bestigors kill (5) Ghouls while only losing (1). (4) Ghouls crumble.



TURN SIX

Vampire Counts

Movement

Movement -> Blood Knights make there charge, Corpse Cart charges Gorthor Chariot in hopes to tie him up so he can't do impact hits on the Blood Knights next turn. Varghulf flank charges the Razorgor Chariot that Rallied. Wraiths head into the building to set up a Scream and Shout.

Magic

Everyone pass Cygor Leadership test (I think I've rolled 10 about 8 or 9 times already, that Vampire Lord has really been in a key position).

12 Power Dice (6+4+2) vs 6 Dispel Dice.

- Purple Sun dissipates when I rolled to move it.
- Cascading Fire Cloak (3 Dice + LvL 3 = 12) Failed Dispel (4 Dice = 9). (3) dead Bestigors, and another (2) wounds to the Cygor.
- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 11) 5 Ghouls Raised
- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 11) 5 Ghouls Raised
- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 11) 5 Ghouls Raised
- Invocation of Nehek on GH2 (2 Dice + LvL 3 = 10) 5 Ghouls Raised
- Corpse Cart's Miasma (1 Dice = 6)

Dispelled

(2 Dice = 11)

Shooting

Banshee's Howl inflicts 5 wounds on the Razorgor Chariot

Combat

- Blood Knights vs Minotaur, Blood Drinker gets (2) wounds finishing off a minotaur and healing 2 Blood Knights. Blood Knights do (11) wound with their Strength 7 charge, leaving only the character alive. Steel Claws = 2 and manages to kill off (3) Blood Knights. Character fails break test fleeing D6" Blood Knights fail and pursue 5".

- Corpse Cart vs Gorthor (F+, PF+) Gorthor does (3) wounds to the Cart but it makes (3) Regen saves. Bagrar, Gorthor's named Chariot assistant, deals (2) wounds to the Cart. It manages to do (1) wound back and wins combat by 1 due to the flank charge. Gorthor fails his break test and flee's 7", the Corpse Cart pursues 5".

- Bestigors vs GH2 (F,+ PF+) Vampire Lord deals (2) wounds and the Hero Vampire gets (1). Wargor wounds Vampire Lord but she makes her save thanks to the Flayed Halbrek. Bestigors

kill (6) Ghouls and Cygor adds another (5) crumbling (7) leaving the unit back where it was at before healing the unit extensively.

Beastmen

Movement

Minotaur can't rally and continues to flee, Gorthor rallies.

Combat

Cygor/Bestigor vs GH2 (F+, PF+) Vampire Lord does (1) wound and makes (2) Ward Saves from the Wargor. Bestigors kill (1) Ghoul before getting killed by them. Cygor kills (4) and (3) crumble. (1) crumble goes on the Helm of Commandment Vampire as all the Ghouls are dead.



CONCLUSION

Victory Points

Vampire Counts

Blood Knights (635)
Blood Drinker Vampire (190)
Vampire Lord (450)
Helm Vamp 50% (93)
Necromancer 50% (38)
Varghulf (175)
Wight King BSB (257)
Cairn Wraiths (325)
GG1 (445)
Killing Enemy BSB (100)
Standards Collected x7 (175)
Total: 2880

Beastmen

Gorthor 50% (175)
Cygor 50% (138)
Wargor (143)
G3 (265)
Standards Collected x4 (100)
Total: 821

Vampire Counts Win by a Margin of 2059 points which by 7th ed. standards would be considered a "Solid Victory".

Post-Game Synopsis

This game was a lot of fun to play, I had no idea who was going to win right down to the last turn. Both sides had some tough breaks but they were pretty even. The Black Coach getting

smashed early, some attack rolls just being downright awful, some break tests that could have gone better for Beastmen, especially the weak sauce flank change that caused 2 panic tests and a break test. The dispelling of the Transformation spell. The Beastigors attacking 2nd based on initiative and getting murdered by the Blood Knights. It was a very entertaining game and I hope you enjoyed it too!

Most Valuable Players

Vampire Counts

Blood Knights (Killed -AS Bestigors, Unit of Gors and the Minotaur)

Beastmen

Cygor (Destroyed BC at start of game, Flank changed 2 units dealing considerable damage each round)

Rotten Egg

Vampire Counts

Black Coach (Destroyed after only 2 rounds, was a complete non-factor)

Beastmen

Ungor Group that fled from a panic test (This unit never got into combat, it was in the wrong place at the wrong time)

Biggest Surprises

SK1 (Flank charged Ug4 and they failed a LD 9 Break test with a re-roll and caused the Centigors beside them to panic, and those ran through the Ungors mentioned above that also failed there panic test.)

Cygor (He gets re-rolls to hit vs Undead and several other things listed which allowed him to get lots of kills despite being only WS 2)

Funniest Moment

When the Corpse Cart finished off the Razorgor Chariot.

I think the reason it was so epic is because I had 10 Weapon Skill 2 Strength 2 attacks and only needed to do 1 wound, and I got lucky when it failed its armour save!

Look of Death

A Painting Tutorial by Redarmy27

I've had a lot of questions on how I did Vlad's skin from the entry I presented for the Golden Bat painting competition (Winter 2010). In this tutorial I will show you how I achieved the pale, pallid look of vampire skin!

Step One:

Prime the model black and be sure to use light coats. I applied two light coats of primer to preserve the details. Be sure to go back over any spots you missed with a light coat of chaos black.



Step Two:

Apply a basecoat of a mix of Space Wolves Grey and a flesh color; I used Ryn Flesh by P3. Apply three thin coats and make sure to keep it smooth!



Step Three:

Now it's time for the shading glaze. I created a glaze of P3's beaten purple and water in an eight to two mix ratio. Cover the entire model lightly. This will look crazy, if not stupid, but stick with me. This will give the effect of cold blood and veins running through the model.



Step Four:

Take thin glazes of space wolves gray- mixed with codex gray and begin to draw the paint from the purple recesses to the high points. This will begin to create smooth transitions from the dark to the light. Note: do not cover up the purple too much or you'll lose the effect it will create.



Step Five:

Take a very light wash over the entire model with Exile Blue by P3, or any darker blue by GW. Draw the paint into the recesses.



Step Six:

Take your original basecoat mixed color and very lightly begin to draw paint from the recesses to the highpoints. Make sure not to cover up too much blue. This is the creation of your transparent look!



Step Seven:

Take your basecoat mix and mix with a little bit of white, apply lightly and work to the highest points.



Step Eight:

Take your basecoat mix and create a glaze. Apply two or three times very lightly to create a binding wash which will help unify all points of the model.



For those of you who don't remember, here is how Redarmy applied this technique to his winning entry Vlad von Carstein - DoN



mantic

"Our wrath shall be terrible and beautiful to behold. It is time that the lesser races learned to fear the Elves once more."

Etherrax Bladedancer, on the eve of the Battle of Dalaruth Fields

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a call to arms

Written by Johnny B

List building for vampire counts

While the cries and lamentations of 8th edition nerfing and eBaying of armies have resounded through the halls and catacombs of Vampire lairs the world over, I see much of this as a knee-jerk reaction to a new edition and new rules. Yes, it is true, we no longer wield the sort of auto-win capabilities we once had; I, for one, think this is a good thing, not least because many of the power-gaming snotty-noses will now be leaving our bleak shores for greener pastures of wearing white and Always Striking First or growing a beard and drinking lots of beer while complaining. Good riddance.

With that out of the way, I would like to examine what considerations face us true VC players in the 8th ed. gaming environment. Obviously, as 8th ed. is still hot off the shelves (at least at the time of writing) some of this will be speculative and much may need reconsidering. So, without further ado, let us examine some of the changes in 8th and what they mean for the VC.

Changes in melee, 8th edition

Fighting in ranks: *This is a change that gets better according to the quality of your troops; our troops are appalling in combat, hence this is bad news for us.*

Steadfast: *The side with more ranks is effectively stubborn; while this is great for mortal units, it is nothing but bad news for the Undead. It also means cavalry are no longer the unstoppable hammer they used to be.*

These two changes alone mean we must take drastic measures. Increased casualties mean increased crumbling, thus we lose out two-fold, no Steadfast for us. The only viable responses to this are increased damage output and larger units to better absorb crumbling. Cavalry is also less viable in small games, for us and everyone else.

Fight in Initiative Order: *All combats now take place in Initiative order, regardless of charging.*

This is a double-edged sword for us; while our Vampire characters benefit and our rubbish Core troops don't really notice a difference, our shock units will feel the pain when they charge (particularly Black Knights and Varghulfs).

Changes in melee, 8th edition

Winds of Magic: *Dice pools decided by a 2D6 roll instead of magic levels. This means the legendary 14 Power Dice Mannfred army is a thing of the past. Big wizards don't automatically equal big magic phases.*

Casting Dice: *Anyone can roll up to 6 dice. Level is added to the total.*

The random dice is bad news, but is somewhat made up for by adding the caster's level to the total, making a Lord able to cast many spells on 2 dice. Master of the Black Arts is now a key ability, even more so than before.

New Spell Lores: *The rulebook lores are now more distinctive than ever, and very powerful.*

This is as much of a boon to us as anyone else, maybe more so.

Loss of Concentration: *Failing to meet the casting value of a spell means no more casting for that wizard.*

This is a serious blow to one-die Invocation-spam, whatever your opinions of spamming. Spamming is still possible, but only advisable towards the end of the magic phase, after important spells have been cast

Bound Spells: Bound items cast using Pool Dice.

This means Corpse Carts now consume Pool Dice, alongside Book of Arkhan/Staff of Damnation, etc. This is a noticeable downgrade, though it must be noted these are unaffected by Loss of Concentration.

Irresistible/Miscast: Now both happen on a double 6.

Less chance of something going wrong, but when it does...

New Miscast Table: Lots more strength 10 hits.

This makes heavy casting as a Vampire Lord a riskier business, doubly so when items like Infernal Puppet and Cupped Hands remain in circulation. A bad roll (the large template result) could take out half (or more) of his unit, while the chance for auto-dying is still there. He should always hang about on the edge of his unit, thus minimising damage to his unit.

Changes in Army Selection

Percentages, No Slots: No limits on characters beyond their point's values.

While the first thought of most VCs players was, 'OMG, so unfair', the truth is that it is not that much of a hindrance, as Heroes seem generally less effective anyway. It also means cheaper Heroes like Necromancers and Wight Kings, can now crop up unhindered by slots.

25% Minimum Core: 25% of your army must now consist of the recently dead, the

long dead and the very smelly.

This is painful for VCs. The requirement to include 25% of your army as the worst fighters in the universe is not appealing, no matter how cool Skeletons look. Yet the true implication of this is more serious; it means less points for Specials, Rares and Characters.

Conclusion

The basic changes mean VCs as a whole need more damage output and larger units and have less space for the troops that can

actually fight well. The new magic lores are more suited to damaging our enemies rather than reliably regenerating our own forces, but nonetheless are a useful tool that we should take advantage of.

Selecting an Army

Below are some of the criteria that we must bear in mind when building an army.

Units must be large to be survivable.

This ties in nicely with the 25% minimum Core requirement; instead of the 3-4 small units of 10-15 seen in 7th, 8th ed. will likely see 2 or 3 large blocks of 25-30 in order to meet the requirement.

Vampire Lord.

He is still the most important part of the army, and will likely decide the composition of the rest of your army. Super-Magic or Combat Beast? Or maybe something in between?

Who are you facing?

Making allowances for particularly troublesome enemy units is prudent.



Redundancy.

Having multiple solutions is always nice. You never want to be in a situation where you have only one option (or worse, none) against a given threat, as a good opponent will clock this immediately.

Thus, here is an example of a 2000 point, all-comers list based on my thoughts from early games of 8th edition. It's been constructed to illustrate how I would approach the needs of an all-round force and hopefully it comes across as reasonably sensible. I have played at a high level at the UK GT many times, so I must be doing something right some of the time...I think...

Lord

Vampire Lord

455pts

- +Summon Ghouls
- +Forbidden Lore: Death
- +Master of the Black Arts
- +Sword of Strife
- +Crown of the Damned
- +Flayed Hauberk
- +Lv3 Upgrade

Heroes

Vampire

225pts

- +Battle Standard
- +Lord of the Dead
- +Forbidden Lore: Vampires
- +Helm of Commandment
- +Black Periapt
- +Charmed Shield

Core

30 Ghouls

248pts

- +Ghast

30 Ghouls

248pts

- +Ghast

16 Skeletons

148pts

- +Full Command

Special

3 Spirit Hosts

195pts

Rare

Varghulf

XXXpts*

5 Blood Knights

305pts

- +Standard
- +Banner of Hellfire

*Individual points cost omitted due to Games Workshop copyright

Overall, the army is designed to have as many options as possible against a wide variety of opponents. While the army does have more spells than it will ever have the dice to use, it has many tools for many jobs. The key is options.

The Vampire Lord is a slightly unconventional build. Lore of Death is simply too good to pass up; Purple Sun is the ultimate counter to Steam Tanks, Dwarven gunlines, Lizardmen Temple Guard and other power units that VCs otherwise struggle with. Master of the Black Arts means even a low roll for power dice isn't fatal. The Lord is still very capable in melee, with 6 Strength 5 attacks, a 2+ armour save and 4+ ward save. He should still pick his fights though, and Spirit Leech, Caress of Laniph and Fate of Bjuna from the Lore of Death allow him to vanquish more powerful opponents without having to fight them up close.

The BSB, while a non-combatant, is one serious multi-tasker and will clearly have to be modelled as a woman. The Helm of Commandment works nicely to give the troopers superior Weapon Skill and her spells also help to bolster the army. Lore of Heavens could be a good alternative choice

for her, with its augment spells. The Periapt is a further insurance against low power rolls and can also help with defence; the battle standard helps a little with crumbling, as well as granting re-rolls for the Lord's Stupidity, the Blood Knights' Frenzy and crumble tests should the worst happen. I'm not sure if the Charmed Shield works against a hit from a miscast but I see no reason why it shouldn't and its only 5 points either way. (S)he is the second heart of the army and must be safeguarded at all costs

The Ghouls are the main combat blocks, they are unlikely to win combats without aid (magical or more direct) but are a much better bet than Skeletons due to their WS3 and T4. While many say Ghouls and Skeletons are equal against missile fire, this is only true when the missile fire is strength 3. Against crossbows and handguns, Ghouls are superior. Ghouls are also much better in melee, their poison even allowing them to deal with threatening targets like Giants. Most often, Helm of Commandment will be used on these.

The Skeletons are in there mainly because they provide a bunker for the BSB and a banner for the Blood and Glory scenario, but also because they look cool (its an important reason). At a pinch, they can be Invoked up to plug a gap in the line, but bear in mind they are just shockingly poor in melee.

The Spirit Hosts are a controversial choice for many people. While Wraiths are seen as the superior ethereals, I decided the hitting power of the Blood Knights was more important. The Spirits are mainly included as a further counter to powerful enemy hammers like War Hydras and Steam Tanks. As an aside, they are also immune to the Dreaded 13th spell from the Skaven deck, unlike Wraiths. And they also look cool.

The Varghulf is now a much more fragile choice than before, with GW's completely unnecessary removal of Wards and Regeneration vs crumbling. He is still the only fast-moving 'sweeper' that we can field though, and as long as his targets are carefully picked he should do okay. He will hunt artillery and skirmishers, while hugging terrain. Against larger enemy formations, he should try and hit with the Blood Knights for some serious damage.

Blood Knights. I rarely used these in 7th, and am still something of a novice with them in 8th. But they hit like nothing else in our list and 8th is all about winning combats to survive. The Hellfire Banner means they also provide another solution to the 'bogey' units like Hydras, as well as other people's Drakenhof bunkers, Plaguebearers (rare in 8th I know, but still) and ethereals. A safer alternative would be a block of Grave Guard with great weapons, trading explosive hitting power for increased staying power.



List Check

The list has a robust magic phase, with 2 bonus power dice from the Lord and the ability to save a dice in the Periap, plus the potential for extra power dice from the Lore of Death spells.

It has good combat ability, the Lord, Varghulf and Blood Knights hit hard, and the Ghouls are tough and surprisingly able. The melee hammer units will require careful consideration when deploying however, as they are relatively vulnerable to shooting.

It has an ethereal counter to large monsters and other similar 'tough nut' units. Purple Sun and Spirit Leech provide another alternative answer to most of these threats as well, and the rest of the magic should support the army and provide more ranged threat too.

The Lord is well geared and should be survivable enough, as long as he avoids particularly dangerous enemies in melee.

The Knights and Varghulf do not crumble, a small but helpful silver lining should things go pear-shaped.

The wide variety of units, reasonable numbers and good selection of magic means a no-win scenario should be rare.

Finally

This article is not meant to say, "Here is an amazing army, go use it", as all of you will surely disagree with some, most or even all of the choices made, rather I'm hoping it has brought some extra viewpoints and considerations to your attentions in the way that armies can be constructed. It's always helpful to see how others do it and I'm looking forward to reading more tactical thoughts from other members of Carpe Noctem. Good Hunting!

Quatar, city of the jackal

part two: royalty of death

Written by Lord Marcus

Welcome to the second instalment of the history of the white city. In this article I explore part of the royal line of Quatar, as well as several other influential personae.

High King Amon-zar, First King of Quatar.

Amon-Zar is an old name. The first king's history is shrouded in legend, for he was indeed a legendary man.

Part ruler, part priest and warrior too, Amon-zar was born to the chieftain of the clan that had settled in the foothills on the western edge of the valley of kings after the great migration and the covenant with the gods of the desert.

The young boy who was to found one of the greatest cities of Nehekhara had the heart of a warrior in him, but he also had great intellect. He realized early on that all things must come to an end, and die. Thus, he dedicated himself to the worship of the god of death, D'jaf.

Amon-zar created many of the greatest rituals in honour of the jackal god and it was said D'jaf granted him great power as his favoured mortal instrument.

Indeed, in the later years of his life, after he had founded the city of white splendour, a pack of jet black jackals followed him everywhere he went, and he could instil the fear of the death god upon any he wished.

He did this, for when his father was slain by a mountain beast and the chieftainship passed to him, he set about cleansing the foothills of evil beasts, miscreants and bandits that had harried his people for ages. Hundreds of blackhearts were sent screaming to stand trial before D'jaf's mighty throne.

With his vengeance fulfilled, Amon-zar set about devising the plans for a massive walled fastness, which grew to become a city. Its walls and the buildings were within made from the living rock of the mountains themselves, torn away from the slopes

by work gangs of slaves captured during skirmishes with the other desert clans. This was about the time the other great cities, such as Numas, Zandri, and of course Khemri itself were raised from the wastes.

Amon-Zar's crowning achievement was the white palace, a masterwork of marble colonnades and statues raised to the glory of the jackal god. Literally, as he sat upon the basalt throne in the centre of the palace for the first time, the crown of kings, legacy of the Quatari bloodline, appeared upon his brow, as if placed by an ethereal hand.

Overcome with a wave of piety, the first king proclaimed his undying servitude to his god, pledging to strike down his enemies, even after his end had come to claim his soul. To seal his pledge, he performed the Dha-keset ritual, said to bind the body to the mortal plane.

After his divine coronation, the king set about formalizing the military forces of Quatar, naming his legions the tomb guard

and charging them to hold the white palace for eternity, a pact each man loyally swore. Even though they did not know it, the city of the dead had been tunnelled out into the mountainside behind the palace, and in taking the pledge they were truly guarding the tombs of the king and his lineage.

Each generation of tomb guard has taken the sacred vow, and none have soured their soul by breaking the holy pact.

Now, nearly three thousand years later, Amon-zar continues to serve his lord, even though the covenant has been broken since the time of the black one. The monuments to D'jaf still stand and the legions of Quatar, now naught but bone, stand ready to defend it.

Anket'phakon, Master of the Watch Fires, Gate Keeper of the Dawn and Dusk, The Burned One

Anket'phakon is one of the mightiest and eldest of those who reside within the massive wing of the white palace that is Quatar's mortuary temple. He was alive when Nagash broke into Quatar's outer necropolis, where the accursed one ransacked the mass tomb pits of the poor and several outlying noble tombs for his growing army. As warriors and commoners of Quatar marched from their death-beds at the will of the dark one, the mortuary cult and priests of D'jaf fought back. Animating the temple Ushabti and alighting the blessed tower of the sun, the holy men of Quatar fought in savage defence of their city. Entirely focused on halting the necromancer's blasphemies within the outlying necropoli to the northwest of the city, most of the priesthood had forgotten the still living population. Anket'phakon had not. As master of the watch fires upon the bastion walls he was responsible for the defence of the ramparts if the formal gate keepers were not available. As they had headed out with the rest of the advance force to confront the usurpers legions, they were already dead.

Left with three meagre companies of city archers to defend the mile spanning walls,

Anket'phakon set about his monumental task. He quickly devised a system of runners to keep the archers on the western wall supplied with water and ammunition. With this plan in motion, Anket'phakon sat atop the gatehouse of Neru and set himself into a deep meditation.

When the inevitable siege did come, the priest and his warriors were ready. Part of the chants Anket'phakon had recited during his meditations was calming agents aimed at fortifying his warriors' spirits for the coming battle. When the usurpers horde, both living and dead, marched within arrow range they were met with successive hails of fiery missiles. This was no mundane flame that burned upon the shafts of the Quatari bowmen; it was the sacred flame of the watch fires of Neru. Blessed by the moon goddess herself, this flame was the bane of evil spirits and by extension dark magic. When one of these arrows was loosed the flame would consume the whole shaft, bronze arrowhead and all, and became a holy spear of blessed fire. The still living warriors of the usurpers hordes fell dead when touched by such an arrow, but it was with a smile on their face because the flame had purified their souls of corruption. Animated corpses simply combusted into ash at the merest touch.

Nevertheless, the legions of warriors thrown at the walls were too great and no amount of blessed arrows could stop them. When the hordes eventually gained a foothold on the walls there was nothing the Quatari could do to stop them spilling into the city, and so they bought as much time as they could while the population was finally evacuated.

Meanwhile, Anket'phakon was embroiled in a magical duel with one of Nagash's cursed immortals. Magical spells rent the air above and between the two wizards. Black bolts of dark magic leapt forth at Anket'phakon only to be dispelled and retaliated against, and so the deadly dance of minds continued. Eventually Anket'phakon tired, and was a fraction too slow in deflecting a gout of black fire aimed at his head. Wizen skin cracked and ancient hair was reduced to ash in seconds as the flames took hold. With a scream of anguish that echoed throughout the battlefield, Anket'phakon released the enchantments bound within his vestments and was catapulted from his perch on the gatehouse towards the temple district. The ancient priest landed with a cry in the vast ceremonial pool just outside of the temple of Asaph. The blessed waters quenched the dark flame that enveloped Anket'phakon's form, and the priest climbed from the pool

with the last of his strength before falling into a deep sleep.

When the remains of Quatar's holy men and the royal army returned victorious from the north-western necropoli they were horrified at what they saw. The ramparts of the wall of the moon were stained red from the blood of the bowmen set to guard them, though no corpses could be found. Once mighty processions lay broken and buildings were gutted and fire-blackened. When the remains of the palace guard were discovered passed out against the inner side of the palace gates, the king had them whipped until they retold what had happened in his absence. The terrified guards retold the great battle for the western wall, along with the sacking of the city. One point that caught the interest of the remaining priesthood was the description of a great comet raining down in a blur of black fire towards the temple district from the direction of the wall.

When Anket'phakon was eventually found he was nursed back to health as fast as possible. Over the intervening years since that bloody day the master of the watch fires has crafted himself a mask to hide his blackened, disfigured face and a mane of fiery bronze now adorns his scalp. He has had the honour of being named the

watcher of the gates of dawn and dusk by the royal council and now seeks to annihilate the scourge of blackness upon the world Nagash and his disciples represent. He often accompanies the armies of Quatar to battle, lending his restored strength to combat the enemies of the council.

**Gra'Ketra, Lord of the White City,
Killer of the Bearded Ones, Slavemaster
(two and a half centuries after the death
of Amon-Zar)**

Gra'Ketra was the fifth king of Quatar, and one of the most notable. Even though he had been dead for two hundred and fifty years, Gra'Ketra deeply admired his great-great-great-grandfather. As a boy he had read of all the first king's deeds, and he resolved to aspire to be great like him.

Indeed he became great, but not as he thought he would. The bearded ones of the south had sent an emissary to his court, and the dwarf had boasted his races warriors were the most stubborn in the entire world. Angered by this remark, the king, with the strength of D'jaf in his arm, hurled the disrespectful one from his house, and readied his armies.

And so, three weeks after, the white host of Quatar left the city in the hands of a small body of troops and marched toward the dwarf hold of Karak-zorn. When they arrived, they found the throng ready for them. Cannons poked from unassailable gun ports high upon the walls, and the stone gates had been reinforced with thick timbers from the mountainside.

Unperturbed, the king ordered an immediate bombardment, and so the catapults were wheeled forward.

For three days boulders enchanted with the strength of Geheb ricocheted off the mighty gates while cannon shot plowed into the formations of war machines. Then a mighty shriek split the air, and the runes of the ancient ones failed. The gates broke asunder, and the dwarf host made to sally out in defence of their families still inside.

With an exultant cry of victory, the Quatari host rushed towards the line of steel clad dwarves, the king and his bodyguard at the fore. As the lines met, a sickening crunch could be heard.

At first the shield wall of the dwarves held, but then the Quatari, urged on by the appearance of the Ushabti, avatars of the gods, pushed on and a gap formed, slowly.

Into this gap stormed the king, the blade of jackals in his hands, the crown of kings upon his brow. He slew dwarves left and right, and was like a sandstorm of death that hacked a path towards the dwarven sovereign, who rose in challenge to meet him.

The duel lasted for an electrifying twelve minutes, although the soldiers who witnessed it swore it had been a century.

At last, the dwarf king dropped his guard in accident, for he had misjudged one of Gra'Ketra's attacks to be a feint.

D'jaf's mighty blade stabbed deep, and the dwarf's soul was sent screaming to the underworld to await trial before the gods. There would be no hall of ancestors, for the blades power was ancient and unbreakable.

What followed was a massacre, the disheartened dwarves putting up a fight to the end, but being slaughtered or captured all the same. The hold was ransacked, and all its remaining inhabitants shackled and trekked back to Quatar.

Once the victory celebrations had been had, the king ordered that the slaves be set to work upon armour and weaponry for his legions. This they did, although only with

a grudge in their hearts and a lash at their backs.

Because of their toil, when the eternal legions march forth, they are clothed in great plates of bronze inlaid with gold, the true symbols of the gods embossed upon its surface. Thus armoured they are almost impossible to put down.

That concludes this Instalment of the city of Quatar. Join me next time as we delve into the varied and complex military structure of the city of the jackal.

Note: These are only three of a planned one hundred and fifty unique characters making up a homemade dynasty. If you wish to read more info on the royalty of death, contact Lord Marcus at Carpe Noctem. He is also taking commissions for writing background pieces.

the golden bat competition summer 2010 - results

sponsored by og games and mantic miniatures

Painting Category Winner by Bigcannon



Sculpting Category Winner by Richie





Painting Second Place by Axia

This summer's competition turned out to be our best yet, easily beating the number of entrants and voters than our previous competitions.

Maybe it was the attraction of our many prizes, but as you can see the entries were simply stunning, with hours of hard work put in to produce fantastic results.

It was very hard to vote, as the models you can see here are just a few of a large selection that we all to a high standard.

Still, we somehow managed to do and so congratulations to those that won! I hope you enjoy your prizes and to everyone else, don't forget you can try again in our Winter Competition.

Disciple of Nagash



Sculpting Scnd Place by Dadadda



Painting Joint Third Place by Zoddozoddo



Painting Joint Third Place by Gologuzi osvetnik



Converting and Painting Joint Third Place by Zoddozoddo



Converting Joint Third Place by Ophidicus

the children of maat

book 1: a law unto her own

chapter 18: on the bank of the river vitae ic -1152

The Lush Plains. This close to the rushing River Vitae, the lifeless desert gave way to rich, fertile soil. Nourished by the fresh river's water, and sun-kissed by Ptra's fiery chariot itself, small shrubbery clung to an existence here; patches of green flourished from the earth, tall-stemmed reeds rose along the banks of the river, and further away, where the sandy earth was drier, thin, dry grasses grew into the air. This was as verdant as the desert got, but by comparison to the rest of Nehekhara, it was a haven.

It was the beasts that made it so. Ancient crocodiles lurked beneath the cool, murky waters, barely visibly as a slide of scales and a flash of yellow eyes. Entire herds of cattle, wild and unruly, trampled the sandy grasses in their eagerness to drink, the life-giving river slaking their terrible thirsts, and storks, elegant and graceful as birds came, patrolled the water's edge, peering majestically down over the small frogs and fishes that were the object of their attentions.

Stretching on for as far as the eye can see, the Lush Plains were a respite from the harsh emptiness of the barren desert, and a more appropriate title for this expanse of luscious land could not be found.

The arrival of the legions of Nagash was as a plague on the thriving land. Rank upon rank of bleached skeleton warriors trod the wispy grasses, step after step crushing them into the soil and sand. The recently dead shambled in their wake, polluting the earth with their poisons and contagions. Spoiled meat littered the ground, and diseased flesh filled the air; any bird that sought freedom over their unkempt ranks quickly choked on the putrid stench that they emanated in their foulness. Terror-stricken, the beasts quickly scattered: the mighty wildebeest, the herds of gazelle, even the monstrous grey-skinned

Tuskans that had come to drink here, all fled before the tide of undeath.

Few escaped their clutches, and a cloud of death seeped into the air, even as the vampires' sorcery twisted the skies and turned them black with their own corpulent storm clouds. A shadow held the Lush Plains in the grip of undeath.

Maatmeses stalked toward the banks of the legendary river, and something about the relentless rainfall that poured ceaselessly from the heavens humbled her appearance. Long, black hair matted to her flesh, and ancient armour rang with the patter of rain. It were as though the falling waters washed over the woman, cleansing all vestige of hate, pain and vengeance from her features, leaving her old, and tired, and wet. Not the monstrous vampire that dwelled within her fleshy confines, but a woman of her fifties, exhausted with life and the trials it threw at her. Even her eyes seemed dimmer, and were it not for their crocodilian appearance, which had become almost permanent in her stare, she might have looked mortal.

Up ahead, a small black figure stood silhouetted against the rainy greyness of the sky and the murky brown of the river. It paced the river bank, moving several feet to the left, then several back to the right, and she could see that its hands shook, fists clenched tight with rage. She understood the pain that this man had endured, but it was not pity she felt as she approached him. She did not even recognise the emotion anymore. Instead, a hate, shocking in its simplicity, festered thick and black inside her soul. She hated the men that had done this to him. She hated the world for letting this happen to him. She hated. She hated. She hated.

He did not turn as she stepped up behind him, and as she stood, a statue in the rain, and watched, she realised he had not even noticed her approach. A glazed look captured his eyes as he continued to march back and forth, muttering, always muttering.

“...taken you here...”

“would have done... except that death...”

“...this was to be the place...”

His words rose and fell from earshot as he strode nearer, then further away, and his voice was as unstable as the swollen river before them. Vengeance had moulded her child, she could see that as clearly the moons on a cloudless night. It had taken him in its vindictive grasp, and pulled, and stretched, and rent, until he was barely recognisable as the man he had once been, so much had he been toyed with.

Issa, her Issa. He was as much Issa as he was Retribution now. He existed to kill, to avenge those who had wronged him, and nothing else mattered. She admired him for the man he had become. He was sure of his purpose. He knew what had to be done, and he would stop at nothing until it was achieved.

He was the pinnacle of her beliefs, and he made her so proud.

“Issa.”

“...show you the great river, so beautiful, though nothing compared to...”

“Issa, come to me, Issa.” There was a soothing tone to her usually hard voice that did not sound right coming from the mouth of the woman. Her lips were used to spitting hatred, and orders. Used to being obeyed, and reprimanding the wrong. That something so definitely maternal could still spill out of them was deeply unsettling.

“...would have wed you here... would have wed you here...”

She reached out and touched him, her aged hand clasping his shoulder tight. He froze.

“Issa, return to our quarters, Issa. You are soaked, and tired. Save your vengeance for the true enemy, the ones you can hurt.” Whether he actually heard her words, or it was the strength of her blood-bond that commanded him, he staggered away from her grasp and toward their tent. She turned, and watched him as he surged away, crashing through a lonely corpse as it stood in his way. When he finally disappeared from sight, into the distant black tide of their encampment, she reverted her gaze to the river.

This is where it would be decided, along the banks of the River Vitae. Her eyes narrowed critically. Beset by torrential rain, and hidden in the gloom of their monstrous clouds, the river looked anything but the life-giving channel she remembered it as. Its waters were spoiled with mud, and dark shapes betrayed the presence of lurking predators to her keen, stony eyes.

The armies of the Great Desert were amassed against them. Even now they bore down on the Lush Plains, thousands of chariots, horsemen and soldiers from the length and breadth of the kingdom. Ushoran's vanguard had spoken of as much, and the all-seeing sorceries of that snake W'soran had backed him up in his reports.

There would be no mercy for the losing side. That much was assured. Her legions, the walking dead of the Great Necromancer, would kill the living, to a man. They had no need of slaves, or servants.

All served them in death, in the end.

Through his cursed liche Arkhan the Black, Nagash had made it perfectly clear that every living man, woman and child in Nehekhara was to be slain, and once Khemri fell, the desert lands would be his, once and for all. The undead god craved power and obedience like none she had ever met before, and it was their duty to deliver it to him. She blinked suddenly, fiercely, fighting back as rivulets of water streamed into her eyes.

The vampire stood in the cold rain, glistening and still, and a chill stole over her heart at the thought of her dark lord.

Similarly, she made no mistake in believing the mortals would spare them, should they somehow triumph. They hated her kind. The restless ruins of Lahmia proved as much, and she knew that they would jump at the opportunity to slay her. They were jealous. Blind. A slave to their beliefs, and their pathetic desert gods.

She would kill them all, for the untold grief they had brought her, and it would bring her some respite from the pain.

Stepping down from the bank, she approached the river proper. Her feet sank into the treacherous mud, which rose greedily up her shins, but she effortlessly drew them out, and in less than a minute she had passed the reeds and found herself waist deep in the river. It rushed around her, a torrent of gurgling, bubbling water, pushing, dragging, threatening to drag her silently beneath its surface and whisk her away.

She did not stop, but instead took a step further away from the bank. The water was cool, but not cold, and it was not uncomfortable against her dead flesh. Far from it, she found the sensation of the water rushing through her armour relaxing. It soaked into her robes, the white fabric sticking to her skin, and she closed her eyes, allowing for a shudder to wrack her undead frame. When she opened them again, a face had appeared in the water. Ripples and rivulets ran the ways of her cheeks, and chin, forming the hated visage that had tormented Maatmeses for so many nights, and since its recent reappearance, many days too.

She had thought the woman dead. Long rotted away. She had believed in her heart that the cursed woman's corpse lay somewhere in the vast expanse of desert, a dried, desiccated husk, baked under the sun's relentless heat.

But she had lived. She had lived, where countless others had perished, victims of the intolerable desert sun, and what's more, she had returned. The youthful face twisted, laughing, mocking, tempting terrible memories from the depths of Maatmeses' mind.

She fought them back with a bestial snarl, her face succumbing to the vengeful monster inside, and dashed the haunting expression from the water. It vanished amid a dirty brown spray.

In an instant, she was alone again.

Thunder rumbled overhead, low and sonorous, and in her mind's eye Maatmeses saw Ptra's radiant chariot as it rolled and crashed, useless, against the impenetrable grey clouds. The gods had abandoned Lahmia, siding with the rest of Nehekharan and their plight, and in that moment they had been lost to Maatmeses. She did not need their favour, not when she had the Great Necromancer to guide her. He was as much a god to Lahmia's Cult of Nagash as any of the Nehekharan's pathetic deities had been. He had promised them their Lahmia back. Her Lahmia! He had promised them, yet... She grunted. Over a decade...

Something in her face shifted, and she took a step backwards, toward the bank. The river bed was soft and slippery beneath her heel. Nagash. Nagash. Nagash. An internal struggle fought within the heavy vaults of mind, her sense of self battling against a greater, darker will, even as dark swathes cut through the River Vitae toward her. Ancient growls rattled the air, reptilian and hungry, drowned out by the rolling thunder that shook the skies, and the terrible roars that sounded within Maatmeses' head. She took another step, more of a stumble, and her eyes cringed tight.

The shadows swept closer, slowly but purposefully, five of them converging on the lonely woman. Her arms flew to her head, and she screamed, a feral, guttural sound that echoed the turmoil within. A darkness entered her eyes, similar to the balefires that lit the hollows of her skeletons' skulls, and she growled again.

The dark denizens of the river were almost upon her, mottled green scales flashing through the surface of the raging river. The figure writhed and shook, arms flailing, terrible, brutal sounds tearing from her throat.

Her hand shot to the pendant round her neck. She shook once, twice, bodily shivers that crept the length of her spine and ripped through her limbs.

Then she fell still.

The crocodiles scattered, the ancient, hungry reptiles turning in the water and gliding away, back to the depths once more, and Maatmeses stalked slowly from the water's edge and onto the banks.

Her face was grim, her eyes tired, but they were her eyes, draconic and proud, not the oily blackness of moments before. She would return to her tent, and rest. The cool, dark of her sarcophagus beckoned, and she had not the strength to deny it.

The isolated figure walked off toward the black horizon of their tents, a lonely silhouette against the dank, drab greyness of the once Lush Plains.

Nebtawi stood sentry at Maatmeses' tent. Stationed half-in and half-out of the entrance, he had a clear view of both the confines of their spacious quarters, and the grassy plains outside. The overcast sky rolled on for as far as his eyes could see, a blanket of dark grey that bathed the lands below in a cool shadow. He welcomed the colder air; it caressed him, refreshing and renewing, where the sun's hot touch would have baked his leathery flesh. He had grown tired of Ptra's searing light. Forced to endure the stifling heat for over a century now had brought about a certain resentment in him toward it.

With a single, leaden crash, the lid to one of the sarcophagi inside slammed shut, and Nebtawi knew without turning that Issa had shut himself away. The man had stormed past only minutes before, his eyes bloodshot, ramblings falling from his lips. The ancient vampire had let him pass without a word; Issa made little sense these days, and when he did speak intelligible sentences, it was to vent his fury at Eshe's passing. His vengeance was admirable, but Nebtawi knew a rabid beast when he saw one, and Issa was positively frothing at the mouth. He needed help, before it was too late, and he had no doubt that the only effective remedy, the only means by which Issa could be placated, was for him to fulfill his oaths of vengeance.

That in its own was proving no small feat.

The Nehekharans had put up an honourable fight. The war had stretched on for nearly ten years now, ten whole years of warfare, and skirmish, and bloody battle across the desert sands. They had defended their homes and their loved ones with a temerity that matched anything he and his brethren had held for Lahmia, in its last days. Were the circumstances different, he would have bowed respectfully before their efforts, and left them be. It was a shame they had so much to account for, but that was the way of things.

He could not let their slights pass.

His eyes scanned the darkening horizon, sensing night's approach above the dense clouds. He would sleep soon, in preparation for the coming battle. More reports had leaked of the enemy's scouts circling their forces, and he had been most interested to learn that three of the Dread Lords and their contingents had slunk away from the main body of the undead horde, under direct order from Arkhan the Black himself.

Faced with such facts, the armies of Nehekhar could not be far off now. His ancient blade would taste them soon, and its hunger would be satisfied by their deaths.

With a startling ruckus, three fat carrion descended from the skies, landing atop the festering corpse of a wildebeest. He jumped at the flurry of feathers and beak as they plummeted gracelessly into the carcass, and it was with a flush of crimson to his cheeks that he turned back into the tent. Odji sat there, still as ever, poring over his scrolls and manuscripts. The vampire had not noticed him start, he thought with a breath of relief.

Odji had been sat like that for hours, engrossed in the crumbling parchments that were his life. In glorious Lahmia, he had been the High Justice's Lore Keeper, guardian of the sacred scrolls that detailed the ins and outs of the city's justice system. He was a proud man, fiercely defensive over anything he thought insulting, and it did not take a scholar to realise why.

The man was hideous. His eyes bulged in his head, and his scrawny, hairless figure was nothing to admire. Even his skin was pasty, and Nebtawi was sure the man's papery skin flaked. He fought the grimace that threatened to steal over his face. Odji could not have looked more lizard-like if he tried. Such a man had few friends, and it was obvious to Nebtawi that he had been bullied as a child; it was these factors that bred the defensive, snappy temperament Odji bore.

Of course, when Lahmia had burned and their enemies ran amok throughout its streets, his first concern had been his lore. Nearly a dozen scrolls accompanied his departure from the ruined city, stashed hurriedly into his robes. Those scrolls meant everything to him. They were as much a source of practical interest as they were a symbol of his importance, his usefulness, his worth.

And woe betide anyone who incurred his vengeance, for like all Maatmeses' children, he was as vindictive as he was vicious. Nebtawi did not agree with his brand of justice, he thought, as he turned from the scholarly vampire and left him to his scrolls. Odji was cunning, and employed far more devious means than himself when avenging those who had wronged him. It was evident just from looking at the man. There was no honour in his revenge, and something in the underhand nature of it spoiled its sense of justice in Nebtawi's eyes.

The justice was integral to their vengeance. Otherwise, they were little more than murderous beasts.

He watched the vultures as they devoured their meal. Stringy, fatty flesh came way in their beaks, plucked from the bones of the dead animal, and a red gore smeared their faces. Of all the denizens of the Great Desert, it was the vultures that had prospered since their coming. They were the true victors of war, gorging themselves on the juicy, rotten spoils as kings at a banquet. They reminded him a lot of his own kind; at the simplest of levels, they sated their hungers on the flesh and blood of others. They were opportunistic. Reviled by all but their own kind. They reminded him a lot of Ushoran's youngest gets, the vampires he used to catch as they had sought to escape Lahmia's city walls and feed off the rich, unspoiled pickings of the other kingdoms.

He lifted a hand to his mouth, wiping it free of the crumbs of dried blood that stuck there. As soon as they had stripped the wildebeest clean, the birds would hop eagerly over to another corpse, greed glinting in their small black eyes. It was the nature of the scavenger, to eat whenever possible, and it was something they did well.

A chill stole over Nebtawi's flesh, and he shivered, even as the rain that fell nearest to him hardened and froze. From out of the very fabric of their tent stepped a figure. It was tall, and indistinct even to the vampire's eyes, seeming to slip in and out of focus like a claw of mist, but after a moment's scrutiny he could make out some details. Eyes gleamed gem-like from beneath a wisp of hood, and a great shroud tailed off into the air, grey and smoky. From behind the creature, Odji gave a startled hiss.

An emaciated claw rose from its sleeve, and words filled Nebtawi's head, chilling his thoughts and numbing his flesh. He had seen many wraiths since their exile from Lahmia, but something about this one unsettled him.

"Where is the one who made you."

"Maatmeses' business is her own. Who are you, wraith, and on whose authority do you speak?" Its voice was sibilant, reminding him of the hiss of air from an ancient sarcophagus. Glittering slits fixed coldly onto his own eyes, and it spoke again.

"I am Nar-Zuul, and I speak for the Master. Where is the one who made you."

"Which master?"

"The Master. He is not to be denied." It's sighs echoed into his head.

"I repeat, which master do you serve? There are many that would call themselves such, amongst us." Even as he spoke, Nebtawi's eyes were drawn to movement at the wraith's back, and at first he could not work out what it was that shifted there, as insubstantial as the rest of the cursed creature. Then he saw it: the curves, the feathers, the hunks of misty muscle: Nar-Zuul had a pair of ghostly wings. They hung

there, fading in and out of existence, half-rotten and unclean, but they were wings nevertheless. They reminded him of the carrion that feasted just outside the tent.

"I serve the Master Vashanesh, rightful king of Lahmia and ruler of the blood-drinkers. Where is the one who made you." At the mention of the Dread Lord, Nebtawi stiffened.

"Maatmeses is busy, but she will be back shortly. Is there a message I can pass on to her?" The wraith's claws curled up into a bony fist, as thought clutching at something invisible, then slunk back into its sleeves.

"You will inform her that the Master requests her presence." Nebtawi bowed before the emissary of Vashanesh, his heavy armour complaining, and when he rose again, the thing was gone. He glanced at Odji, but the vampire merely licked his lips and returned to his scrolls, leaving Nebtawi to his thoughts.

If Vashanesh wished an audience with Maatmeses, it meant only one thing. They did not have long. The might of Nehekhara was almost upon them.

"You wished to see me." It was not a question, but a statement. Maatmeses' tone was hard and unforgiving; she had no time for Vashanesh anymore. The vampire summoned her, he gave her fresh orders, and she obeyed. That was the way of things. It had been the way of things for nearly a decade now, and it had showed no sign of changing. The former king of Lahmia did not look at Maatmeses as he addressed her, instead choosing to slowly pace the tent, in the fashion of the scribes of his court of old. It was early; the sun would not yet be risen, and the men of Nehekhara would be stirring, wherever they were. She had received Vashanesh's summons last night, but had slept on them. Something about their urgency was waning, weakening, and her hatred was as much a source of strength as the freshest, hottest of blood.

"The Priest King Alcadizzar is a day's march away. You will remain here, with the bulk of our army, and hold the line, until our rear charge reveals itself. They will be encircled, and there will be no escape for them." He paused, and a certainty entered his voice, a certainty that could not be withheld. "Tomorrow will be the end, one way or another."

She half-heard him. She could see his lips moving, but his words filled her head as though she were listening to the vampire through several feet of water, and underneath it all, repeating over and over in her mind:

"There were unacceptable losses! My own get, Shep-"

"There are no unacceptable losses. All are expendable in the war! We must fight harder, and faster, to ensure the defeat of the priest-kings' armies. Only then will all of Nehekhara be at the dark lord Nagash's complete control."

His words spilled into her veins, filling them with a cold fury that, were it not for that insidious whisper at the back of her mind, would have burst forth in a flurry of violence. Her bottom lips shook, and a slow, steady hiss escaped her throat.

"It will be done." She turned on her heel to leave, struggling to battle the internal conflict that had become like a sickness in her. It devoured her resolve, her sanity, her memories, corrupting everything with its cancerous touch. If ever there was torture, this was it. Only the most heinous of criminals were deserving of such a horrific fate. It was not fair that she should be subject to it!

"I am sorry, Maatmeses." She stopped, and after a moment's silence, Vashanesh spoke again. His voice was melancholic, droning into her consciousness like a rolling dune of sand.

"You deserve better. All of you."

"Better for what?"

"I see the hurt that has been inflicted on you. I see it in your eyes, and the eyes of those closest to you. They reflect it, like calm desert pools, and every new hurt is a rock cast into the waters." She did not turn, but was listening now, the vampire's words percolating her veil of hate.

"The pain casts ripples, and the ripples grow as they spread outward, until everyone and everything around you suffers. There is beauty in that suffering, in the raw, natural concept of it, but there is harm too."

"There is much harm." As Maatmeses spoke, Vashanesh began to pace again. She knew from habit that he would be playing with the ring about his finger. He always did, when wrapped so deep in consternation. She had seen it many times before.

"I cannot stand by any longer while this hurt continues. I was your king." Then, as an afterthought: "I am your king. It is my duty to see that you are not kept imprisoned, like slaves!" His rich voice trailed off, lost for words at the enormity of this realisation. The confession ended, Maatmeses' lips hardened.

"It was your duty a long time ago, and still you did nothing." She stalked from the tent, leaving Vashanesh to his guilt.

Outside it was cool, and relatively dark. Maatmeses strode from the towering black tent that was Vashanesh's quarters, and off toward her own. The dead would rise at her command, and if the vampire's informants were accurate in their assumptions, she did not have long in which to work. Her feet bore her swiftly across the cold sands. Aside from the standing guard of yellowing skeletons that stood, grinning, outside several of the tents, she encountered no others about the encampment. It was earlier than she had first thought, and most would still be sleeping.

She pitied the other Lahmians, that they had the peace of mind to sleep so casually through their immortality. Where was their vengeance? Where was their retribution? Did they not care that even now, their enemies would be plotting against them, seeking new ways in which to strike them from the deserts? Her crocodilian eyes blinked once. They were not worthy of the blood-gift that raced through their hearts.

Time was of the essence. The necromantic rites necessary to awaken the dead had become almost second nature to Maatmeses over the years, but that did not make the process of raising so many of the dead at once any less arduous. She needed time, and focus.

Hate made it easy to focus, and she had a lot of hate. Shepsit's face flashed before her eyes, which were creased in concentration, followed quickly by Eshe's, with her flowing hair and flawless skin. More faces appeared, her children long lost to the insatiable flames that raced like hot poison through Lahmia's veins, and then the great city itself materialised before her, and she was walking its charred streets, stepping the ways of the ashen temple, the ruined statues, the broken columns, and ruby tears ran fierce down the channels of her weathered cheeks.

The chink of metal on metal tore down Lahmia's streets, leaving only sand and tents, which fluttered, black and quiet, in the slight breeze. Movement caught Maatmeses' eye, and she noticed a figure half-reclined against the entrances to one of the pavilions. The makeshift abode was especially grand, standing out against the surrounding tents, and she immediately recognised it as Ushoran's quarters. If the luxurious fabrics and overly-embellished finery of the tent were not evidence enough, the vampire lounging at its entrance was.

It watched Maatmeses as she passed, a curious, arrogant glint to its eye, and it was not until she turned to stare directly back that the man smiled and, downing the bloody contents of the golden goblet in his hand, disappeared back into his tent. Something about that greasy grin tugged her memory, but she could not place him. He had seemed typical of Ushoran's gets; the vampire had notoriously poor taste when selecting those for his blood-kiss. He valued such traits as pride, wealth and physical prowess, when he should instead have searched for intelligence, loyalty, and discipline. It was no surprise that his children were gluttonous and self-obsessed. She grimaced, as though the hatred were a bitter taste on her tongue; she had not forgotten their role in rousing the ire of the priest kings against Lahmia.

When their circumstances changed, they would pay for their indiscretions. They would pay with their blood, they all would, and none would stop her, for she carried the authority of ancient Lahmia itself, and her justice was absolute. Absolute.

Her yellow eyes staring, Maatmeses stalked toward the field of bones that was her army, and the clouds overhead darkened at her passing.

The golden hall was alive with the sound of drums, harps and flutes, and a hundred roaring torches brought light and shadow to the grand banquet. Dancers leapt and rolled down the centre of the chamber, their lithe bodies twisting and bunching in the orange light like living flames. Divine masks adorned their faces, in celebration of the great gods of Nehekhara, but it was obvious from the slender turn of their waists, and the long, smooth olive of their legs that they were all women.

Two ran at each other, Ptra and Neru, and at the last moment the latter ducked, so that the mighty sun god dived clean over her head, to land with a roll behind her. Almost immediately, Geheb and Basth swept forward, vaulting nimbly from the arched backs of the floored dancers and somersaulting through the air. Sweat clung to their flesh, and behind their masks, breath came in short, controlled gasps, but despite this, each dancer was the picture of awe. They moved and turned in time to the music, spinning to the flutes, swaying for the harps and leaping about in answer to the drums' sonorous beats. A wave of applause spilled out from the edges of the chamber, where bystanders and guests were stationed, but by far the loudest applause came from the throne at the far end of the chamber.

Poised and still, her head held high, Queen Neferatem watched the proceedings with an aura of majesty to rival that of the proudest of priest kings. A short, glittering collar rested on her shoulders, and her golden flesh was lined with intricate ink hieroglyphs, each thin black emblem sacred to one of the gods and goddesses of Nehekhara. The woman seemed to glow, to radiate beauty in the fashion of the sun itself, and all those around her dimmed by comparison. None could rival her, with her pitch-black hair, flawless bright skin, and the fierce lust that flickered in her stunning eyes. She was as beautiful as Asaph, as graceful as Basth, as mysterious as Neru, and she was the pride of Lahmia.

Around her were amassed a great throng of dignitaries. Several handmaidens clung to the arms of her throne, or else stood elegantly by its side, and whilst the most beautiful and graceful of Lahmia's girls, they were but pale shadows of their radiant queen. To Neferatem's right, the liche-priest W'soran stood patiently, a haggard figure of a man, thin, old, but possessing of an indescribable aura to match that of his young queen and pupil. He clutched a thin staff in hand, against which he quietly tapped his other hand, as the dancers once more sprang about in acrobatic celebration.

A plethora of slaves lay at Neferatem's feet, those lucky few chosen to accompany her personally into the banquet, but instead of appreciating the dances before them, they cast forlorn glances toward their queen, as though desiring to touch her, to smell her, to be her. A deep longing hung in their idolatrous eyes, the dull glaze of cattle.

Neferatem smiled as the incarnation of Sobki charged toward Phakth, monstrous crocodile head raging, and the hawk-god took the air in the semblance of flight, its somersault carrying it far over the other kneeling dancers. More clapping sounded from around the queen, this time coming from Maatmeses and Ushoran, who stood to her left. The nobleman grinned like some hungry jackal that had caught wind of a carcass; he was thoroughly enjoying the proceedings, all benefit of his sister's royal position.

The drum pace picked up. All eleven dancers flipped backwards, abasing themselves across the warm ground, and with a steady yawn the golden doors to the hall swung open. A solitary figure cartwheeled in, an elegant twirl of arms and legs, and all turned to watch her entrance. Gleaming anklets and tight bracelets clung to her toned, bronze flesh, and wreathes of black cloth hung from her neck and arms. An intoxicating scent accompanied her entrance, hinting to all who caught wind of it of fine wine, and rare spices. More clapping pattered across the room, pleasant and gracious.

The figure came out of the twirl with a flourish of movement, landing smoothly into a crouch, and like some great insect she scuttled forward toward the kneeling gods. It was then that the occupants of the chamber caught sight of her mask, and an air of anticipation settled over them. All but the drums fell silent, so that there was only a single, methodical beat, vibrant and soulful, like that of a terrible heart, to accompany the newcomer's advance.

Covering her face was a bleached skull mask. To the ignorant Nehekharan, it might have seemed like she was impersonating the great god Usirian - in its own right a blasphemous offence - but the denizens of Lahmia's court knew better. They watched with baited breath as the dancer scuttled to stand before the gods and goddess of Nehekharan, her skull mask grinning, gloating, glorious. All fell still, save the wavering torches, which crackled and spat as they burned.

The drums exploded into action. As one the gods surged forward, hands outstretched, each of them eager to tear down the newcomer. Phakth leaped up, her arms spread wide like a soaring hawk's. Sobki's slender arms wove together, as the gnashing jaws of a crocodile, and Qu'aph and Asaph bobbed their heads, masks darting too and fro, their serpent guises snapping, hissing, lunging. With each sudden movement, the flutes sang sharp and quick, piercing the hall and illuminating the anger of the gods.

The skull-faced dancer leapt once into the air, pirouetting as she did so, and every god fell away, thrown symbolically back by the power of the movement. When she landed again, it was to stand in a field of crumpled bodies.

Neferatem slowly rose, clapping three times, and her eyes said it all. In seconds, the rest of the assembly were clapping, even the slaves having turned to watch the final scene, and suddenly the dancers were withdrawing, and more slaves wandered the hall bearing platters of food, and the steady murmur of discussion rose into being. The flutes and harps resumed their music, a relaxed, quiet sound that wafted through the air and into the great hall.

Maatmeses bowed before the queen, then stepped down from the dais, her eyes scouring the now crowded chamber. Hunger rumbled in her stomach, yearning to be fed, the rich aroma of fresh fish and roasted meat doing little to help, but first she wished to find Kheruef. She had spied him earlier, stood against the far wall while the dance unfolded, but had lost him to the sudden crowds that had filled the centre of the hall.

Stepping down, she reached the floor proper, and in seconds was surrounded by the nobility of Lahmia. They stood talking, and laughing, a sea of olive-brown flesh and cream cloth. Golden ornaments shone radiant in the flickering torchlight, magnificent collars and gleaming bracelets. It never failed to interest her, how outwardly everyone could look so similar, and yet inside, they were so very different. Beneath their stark black makeup, their bronzed lips and their elegant robes, any of these men and women could harbour the heart and soul of a criminal, be they thieves, or liars, blasphemers or murderers. They had but to slip once, to carelessly reveal the darkness inside of them, and they would find themselves in her jurisdiction, as much slaves to her authority as those that even now fawned before their young queen.

She felt no guilt in condemning the criminal, be they nobility or not. Their actions were their own, and all capable of injustice were to be found out and punished. They weakened her fair city with their treacherous ways, and weakness could not be tolerated. Lahmia was strong, and proud, and beautiful, and every wrong-doer punished by her hand made it more so.

"Greetings, High Justice. I trust you enjoyed the dance?" She turned and found herself face-to-face with a man. He was tall, and broad-shoulder, and possessing of a greasy grin that belonged on a street trader, not a Lahmian noble.

"Yes, it was most impressive. You are..?" He grinned again, and bowed.

"I am Sekesmet." There was an awkward silence, in which Maatmeses stared at him. "I work for the queen at the palace, organising such events as these."

"Ah, I see. Congratulations are in order, on an excellent performance. Our most radiant queen seemed very pleased with the proceedings." Maatmeses' eyes scanned the crowd for sign of her husband; he could not be far.

"Yes, she seemed very engrossed, did she not? Of all her handmaidens, I believe I chose most wisely when selecting Nurinebit for the honour of dancing as the Great Necromancer himself." Wisdom was not something she would have associated with the man. "I would speak with our most enchanting queen soon, and learn first-hand of her pleasure."

"Do not let me keep you," replied the High Justice, her hard eyes returning to Sekesmet's. There was a cunning there, she noticed, that belied his stupid grin. Such cunning did not warrant honesty; she had seen it a hundred times before in the eyes of the guilty.

"You seem distracted, is there something bothering you? Perhaps I can be of some assistance."

"I seek my husband, but have lost him in the wake of the dancers. He is Kheruef, of the city guard." Sekesmet's fine eyebrows arched, and some humour tugged at the corners of his lips.

"Kheruef.. Yes, I have seen him. The man was posted against the entrance wall, with several others, I made the arrangements myself. He was not three feet from there when I last passed, talking with another of the guests. A most attractive young woman, if my eyes did not deceive me." Maatmeses' own lips curled with distaste, but the irritating man ducked back and into the crowd once more, his taut bronze torso vanishing along with so many others of its kind. Snatching at a mouthful of roasted perch as it drifted past on a golden platter, Maatmeses swept in the direction Sekesmet had indicated.

The nobles of Lahmia parted at her passing. All recognised Maatmeses and respected her, for the authority that she wielded. Her punishments were a most potent deterrent for the unlawful of the city, and she was infamous for her dedication to her work.

Pride glowed in her heart.

Up ahead, nearer the walls of the chamber, where it was quieter, couples stood and talked. Her gaze was drawn to Nurinebit. The young girl was deep in conversation with one of Queen Neferatem's own guards. When he turned, she recognised him instantly as Abhorash. The man's skills with a blade were legendary throughout the city, and there were few who did not know him. Nurinebit looked flustered; whether that was a product of her most recent performance, or whether it was the warrior's words that inspired such a reaction, was anyone's guess. Without the macabre skull mask, she was a most beautiful girl. Worthy of the man's attentions.

Then she saw them.

Kheruef was stood against the wall, fully armoured, and before him stood the slight form of Istnofret. She knew it was her from the manner in which the girl stood. For a second, Maatmeses advanced, pleased to have found the two together, in the same place. Then Sekesmet's words hit home, and his telling leer rose before her, and she watched through hardening eyes as Istnofret flicked back her hair. As she laughed, and touched Kheruef's arm.

As Kheruef's own hand reached out, and graced her shoulder. Maatmeses' breath caught in her throat.

They seemed to realise their fault, for Istnofret's gaze fell to her feet, and her husband looked over, his keen eyes scanning the crowd. Time slowed to a standstill.

Maatmeses looked at her husband, really looked at him, and everything seemed changed, in his face, his stance, even her memories of him, polluted by that one, telling touch.

He did wrong her with his treacherous lusts.

Heart throbbing as though stung by Sokth himself, Maatmeses stepped back into the crowd and away from the pair. She knew attraction when she saw it; she was far from young, and years brought with them experience. Understanding. Kheruef could not be trusted. Kheruef, her Kheruef.

And Istnofret! A lump rose in her throat, and the High Justice swallowed it, the feeling sinking like a rock of cold certainty in her stomach. Hot fury flushed her cheeks. The room swam in and out of focus, and it was only after several hurried blinks that it regained clarity. She pinched her eyes at the bridge of her nose and stalked off through the banquet. She could not be seen to show weakness, not with her reputation to uphold. She would not!

Blood racing from the revelation, Maatmeses made for the small entrance at the opposite side of the chamber, and for the quiet of the passages beyond. Law was her life. It was the air she breathed, the food she ate, and a weapon with which she smote the dishonest. Kheruef and Istnofret would do well to curtail their sacrilegious behaviour.

There were none in all Lahmia as adept with the law as she.



THE INVOCATION

in the next issue.....

Due out December 2010

Upcoming Articles

Indepth look at the Strigoi line, including rules for Ushoran

How to counter popular powerful builds

.....and as usual much more

Having finished this issue of interactive goodness, I hope that the changes have made it all the more enjoyable. We would love to hear feedback, so if you have any make sure you let us know over at Carpe Noctem!

Until the next fun filled issue....



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